



Fire This Time!

RACISM & POVERTY: TWO DISEASES OF DECAYING CAPITALISM IN THE U.S.



"Now, an awful truth emerges, out of the sweet mouths of the youth: 'We Can't Breathe!' they shout. Why not? Because, in the richest country on earth, poverty pitches pennies on the street corner, hoping, against hope, to hit. Because a simple education is beyond the ability of the neo-liberal state to provide. Because today's school is tomorrow's prison, and a place where hatred and humiliation lives, not knowledge; under the ridiculous rubric of No Child Left Behind.

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**The battle against
Bill C-51
is not over!**



"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." - Martin Luther King Jr.

On June 18, 2015 the widely controversial and even more widely hated Bill C-51 officially became a law in Canada. Bill C-51 became a law even though it was clear to everyone that the majority of people in Canada, as well as a broad front of major legal, human rights, civil liberties, labour and media organizations, opposed the Bill.

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IMPERIALISM IS THE CAUSE OF WARS & MISERY AROUND THE WORLD, AND MUST BE FOUGHT AND DEFEATED!



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Stop Lies & Deceptions! How Mainstream Media Falsifies the Truth About Cuba



1 million people marched on May 1, 2015 in Havana, Cuba to celebrate International Worker's Day. The banner reads: "United in building socialism"

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IMPERIALISM IS THE CAUSE OF WAR, OCCUPATION & MISERY AROUND THE WORLD,



By Nita Palmer

A Talk by Nita Palmer, the author of "War and Occupation in Afghanistan, Which Way Forward?"

Hello everyone and welcome to this important forum on this beautiful sunny evening, I wish we could find a way to do this outside because it would be wonderful! I also want to say thank you to Wala for her beautiful poem, that's a very nice thing to have, to have a little art before my hopefully not too long talk.

The purpose of this forum today is to reflect on what has happened in the last 14 years of war since September 11, 2001. It's been 14 years since the war on terrorism started, and this war as we all know has cost trillions of dollars and millions of lives around the world. This war on terrorism, we were told, was going to make the world a safer place. It was going to bring security to us in North America so that events like the September 11th attacks on the world trade center would never happen again. It was supposed to bring human rights and democracy to countries throughout the Middle East and North Africa. But instead, over the last 14 years we have seen terrorism increase, both throughout Western countries in the Middle East and around the world. And human rights and democracy certainly have not improved. Today I think as peace-loving people, many of us here have been activists, some for many more years than I have been, some for more years than I have been alive, but I think that it's very important for all of us

to come together and to reflect on really what this last almost a decade and a half means.

Did We Win Afghanistan?

We will start our story in Afghanistan. The war began there in October 2001, and the Taliban were quickly overthrown with the U.S. bombing campaign. This was supposed to usher in a new era of democracy and human rights in that country. But where is that country today? Today, the supposedly democratically elected government of Afghanistan, of President Ashraf Ghani, is well known to be a farce. The government has very little real power outside of Kabul, and even their hold within Kabul is tenuous at best. Afghans in the majority do not have faith in their government, which has massive problems with corruption, as many government officials and politicians are known to be well connected to war-lords. During the last election there were dozens of reports of war-lords forcing people to vote for Ashraf Ghani, ballot stuffing, people basically being forced to vote a certain way at gun-point. Yet these elections were hailed as a democratic transition in Afghanistan. These war-lords control large parts of the country, with militias basically acting as hired guns, who are often supported by Afghan and U.S. government funds. The Taliban also has had a resurgence and control large parts of the country, even collecting taxes and administering a judicial system in some regions. So I'm sure today, after 14 years of war and bloodshed and over 100,000 lives lost, there is no real democracy in Afghanistan. The war has not improved

human rights there either. In the West, it has been celebrated in the media that children can fly kites in Afghanistan now, they can play soccer, people can listen to music, all the things that were not allowed under the Taliban. But what do these rights mean in a country where the most basic human rights are still not met and in fact in many ways have deteriorated since the war began. Forty-two percent of the Afghan population still live in poverty, which is defined as less than \$2 a day in Afghanistan. The unemployment rate is around 40%, and thousands of children are still not able to go to school because they must work to feed their families, especially those who have had their fathers killed in the war. The fighting and ongoing violence has displaced 4.1 million Afghans. Half a million of those have been displaced internally and are living in refugee camps with little access to food, water, employment, and medical aid. As we saw in the videos we watched earlier, opium production in Afghanistan - which was almost nonexistent under the Taliban - has skyrocketed with record highs last year and now is producing the majority of the world's heroin. Along with this, drug problems have become epidemic across the country, and along with it HIV and AIDS, a disease which was almost unheard of in Afghanistan before the war. Yes, schools and hospitals have been built across the country. But many of them remain empty due to the lack of security, staff, supplies or funds to run them. Most of these projects are good for little more than a backdrop for photo-ops. So Afghans today remain in a position which is no better than before the war - except that now, they also have to deal with the constant home raids, harassment at check points, ongoing violence and insecurity in their country.

Did We Do Better in Iraq?

Then the war moved on to Iraq, which was invaded in 2003 under the justification of liberating Iraqis from Saddam Hussain and getting rid of weapons of mass destruction. Of course we knew almost immediately that the claims of Iraq having weapons of mass destruction were a lie. Saddam Hussain may be gone, but human rights in Iraq certainly have not improved. The war killed more than 1 million people according to the Lancet Medical Journal, and today nearly a third of Iraqis live in poverty and that number is rising. The health-care system, which was once one of the best in the Middle East, has been destroyed by the war. Many hospitals were destroyed by the bombings, and only some have been rebuilt. But the greater problem is the lack of doctors, because so many were killed in the war or forced to leave the country. According to the charity organization Med Act, between 2003 and 2007 half of Iraq's doctors left the country. Along with this, other medical and public health factors have been documented to be falling. The number of fully



immunized children dropped from 60% of Iraqi children before the war to 45% after. In addition, the bombing campaign pounded Iraq with thousands of tons of depleted uranium and chemical weapons, which has left the country with a toxic legacy which will be there for thousands of years to come. It has polluted the air, water and land especially in southern Iraq. The overall cancer rate in the country has increased from 40 cases per 100,000 people in 1991 to 1,600 per 100,000 in 2005, according to the Iraqi government. The Iraqi ministry of health has reported a sharp increase in miscarriages, infertility and horrific birth defects in Iraqis throughout the country. Some of these birth defects that children are born with are too horrific to describe. It's like something out of a horror film: children born missing limbs, or born with organs outside of their body, their lives short and painful. This is thanks to the U.S. campaign for human rights in Iraq. In terms of democracy, before 2003 Iraq was a relatively developed country. Iraqis suffered greatly from the first Gulf War and a decade of sanctions, but the country was fairly stable. The overthrow of the government of Saddam Hussain did not bring democracy to Iraq. Instead it has thrown the country into more than a decade of violence. The overthrow of Saddam Hussain and the installation of a weak U.S.-backed Iraqi government allowed a violent extremist group to come to power, ISIS. The roots of ISIS are in Al-Qaeda in Iraq, a group which did not exist in the country before the U.S. invasion. There is ample evidence that the U.S. and their allies have been aiding and abetting ISIS very directly, even while they claim to be fighting them. However, even if you do not believe this, it's undeniable that the U.S. invasion of Iraq has at the very least set the stage for ISIS to come to power. Now, the U.S. and their allies, including Canada, have begun bombing the country again, in the name of fighting ISIS, the very terrorist force which they helped create. Many people in this country were proud that Canadian forces did not invade Iraq in 2003. But today more than 700 Canadian soldiers have been sent to the country, and Canada has conducted over 50 airstrikes there.

They Destroyed Libya, to What End?

The next target to be in the sights of this war drive was the NATO bombing of Libya. This expanded the imperialist campaign from the Middle East into North Africa. Once again, the justification was the support for democracy and the so-called popular movement against the president Muammar Gaddafi. But what occurred in the country was in fact one of the most crushing blows to secularism, democracy and human rights in the region. Before the NATO bombing of the country, Libya had the highest GDP in Africa, and the highest life expectancy as well. Health-care and higher education were universal across the country, and Libya had a lower poverty rate in fact than some



western countries, even than some European countries. Since the NATO bombing of the country, what is essentially a civil war erupted. The country has been set back decades and is now a failed state. It's under the control of at least five different groups, two main ones, and the official government of Libya has no real control. It's a scattering of militias and other groups, including ISIS, who are vying for power across the country. The economy has been destroyed and Libya's once stellar health-care system is on the brink of collapse. Libyans are fleeing the country in droves, many dying on the dangerous journey to Europe and creating a refugee crisis on that continent. If the U.S. and NATO are trying to promote freedom, democracy and human rights in the region, why would they attack Libya, which had one of the best human rights records in the region? The real crime of Gaddafi was defending Libya's political and economic independence, and supporting other African countries to do the same. Former CIA officer Clare Lopez told the Daily Mail that the U.S. was knowingly facilitating the provision of weapons to known Al-Qaeda militias and figures in Libya. So if this war is about fighting terrorism, why is the U.S. working with Al-Qaeda? This beyond anything else proves that the U.S. will work with terrorists who they claim to be fighting in order to achieve their strategic interests.

How Imperialists Destroyed One of the Cradles of Civilization?

In Syria, a supposed popular movement against President Bashar Al-Assad began in 2012. But from the beginning this popular movement was suspicious. It did not start as the other Arab Spring protests did, a mass movement in a large city, but with a small group of armed rebels in a town near the Turkish border. The New York Times reported that CIA operatives were working within Syria, helping to supply weapons to the rebels shortly after the war began. This so-called

civil war has killed over 200,000 people, and displaced over 10 million, according to the United Nations. The country's health-care system, which had improved greatly since the 1980's, has largely been destroyed or disrupted since the war. Many hospitals and health-care clinics have been destroyed or do not have the equipment to operate, and a lack of security prevents many Syrians from accessing health-care, particularly women and children. A report on Syrian health-care before and during the war published in the *Avicenna Journal of Medicine* found specific concerns for the chronically sick: *"It is estimated that more than half of those chronically ill have been forced to interrupt their treatment. These concerns are exacerbated by the virtual halt of referrals of ordinary patients outside of conflict areas, as life-threatening injuries receive a higher priority in an overwhelmed health-care system."* Today, only 43% of the primary health-care centers in Syria are partially functional, and there are country-wide shortages of even the most basic medicines. The education system in the country has been decimated as well, and risks leaving an entire generation of Syrian children lost without an education. The UN High Commission on Refugees reported that before the war 97% of children attended primary school, and 67% attended secondary school. Today enrollment is as low as 37% in some areas. There are 2.5 million children not in school. The report said that *"what remains of Syria's education system bears little resemblance to pre-crisis conditions"* and found that *"schools had been destroyed, teachers fled and children were unable to attend classes due to lack of security."* Although what is happening in Syria is being called a civil war, it is in reality a proxy war. There is plenty of evidence that the U.S. and their allies created and fanned the flames of the conflict by supplying the so-called rebels of the Free Syrian Army with material support and training. In March 2015 the U.S. announced that they would be spending \$70 million on aid to these moderate rebel groups in Syria. And yet many of these rebels have gone on to join Al-Qaeda and ISIS. So even as the U.S. and their allies, including Canada, claim to be fighting ISIS, they are arming its supporters. Now a large part of Syria is under control of ISIS, thanks to the support of the U.S. and their allies. But the proxy war was no longer enough for the U.S. to try to achieve its ends in the country, and airstrikes have begun by the U.S. and Canada in Syria.

Yemen, The Latest Victim of Imperialist Military Aggression

The latest war to open in the Middle East is the massive bombing of Yemen. Its officially not led by the United States, but by the Gulf Cooperation Council led by Saudi Arabia. But the U.S. has provided logistical and intelligence support, by re-fueling planes and identifying targets for the Saudis to bomb. The airstrikes have killed over 2000 people so far, and 19 people were killed today alone. But

these numbers don't even include the hundreds of Yemenis killed over the years by U.S. drones strikes in Yemen. The CIA through its drone strike program claims to be targeting terrorists in Yemen, but dozens of innocent civilians have been killed. These airstrikes have destroyed many of Yemen's ancient and beautiful historical sites, as well hospitals, schools, and other vital infrastructure. The shortage of fuel in the country has caused wide-spread power outages and forced hospitals to close, leaving those injured in airstrikes without urgently needed medical care. This brutal war in Yemen was yet again justified on the basis of stopping terrorism. But in this case the terrorists that the U.S. and the Gulf Cooperation Council are trying to stop is a popular opposition movement to the U.S. and the Saudi-backed government of Mansur Hadi. This movement has been

labeled as so-called "Iranian-backed Houthis" but in fact the popular movement against the government which began in 2011 was much broader than this.

The U.S. War on Terrorism Failed

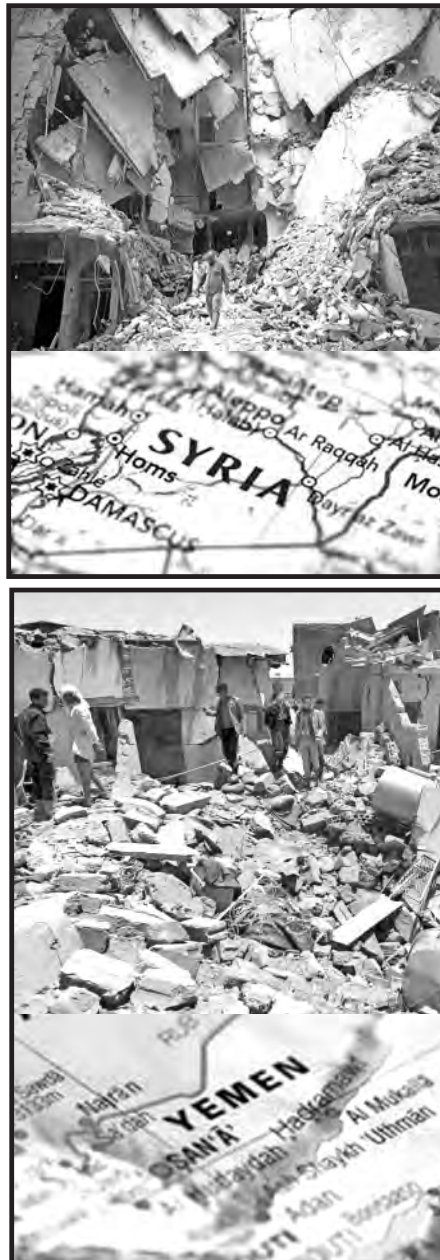
So we can see, this is a very brief picture of some of the things that have happened over the last 14 years of war and occupation. How has democracy improved? We see nothing but evidence that it is failing in every country that the U.S. and their allies have intervened in. Terrorism certainly hasn't stopped, we now have ISIS spreading across the Middle East and into Europe as well. This hasn't improved the security situation for anyone in the Middle East or really anywhere in the world.

So why has this war on terrorism failed? They spent trillions of dollars on this, there has been massive amounts of resources from around the world put into this war, why has it not succeeded? At one time you may have been able to argue that this is just a failure on the part of governments around the world. But I think today the evidence is clear. Governments including the U.S. are working directly and indirectly with some of the most brutal and anti-democratic forces in the region, including terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda which they supposedly set out to rid the world of. I think the only logical conclusion from this is that spreading democracy and human rights and stopping terrorism never was the true objective.

So if that's the case, what was? I would argue that the real reason behind the past 14 years of war are political and economic agendas. The global capitalist competition for trade markets and natural resources is increasing, and imperialist countries are trying to secure their hold in the market. While countries like Canada, the U.S. and Britain are ultimately in competition with each other, they have formed alliances against the larger threats to their power. Up and coming economic powers such as China and Russia threaten the hegemony of the US and their allies. Another major threat to their economic and political dominance are popular movements in the third world, movements for self-determination in which people are demanding control over their own lives, countries, and resources. Should the worldwide movements for self-determination succeed, they would deal a serious blow to countries such as the US and Canada, which have gained wealth through the plundering of other nations' resources.

U.S. Imperialism is the Source of All Social Ills Around the World

Now, this might just sound like a crazy conspiracy theory, but I have some evidence straight from the horse's mouth to back it up. In 1992, the U.S. Defense Planning Guidance, a classified document that was leaked to the New York Times, said the following: *"Our*





in the media are being portrayed that way because it is in the interests of forces within Canada and the United States to portray them as the big enemy. In fact, the real threat to humanity today is imperialist forces across the world. They have proven without a doubt, over the past 15 years and for many hundreds of years before, that they

first objective is to prevent the reemergence of a new rival. This is a dominant consideration underlying the new regional defense strategy, and requires that we endeavor to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources would, under consolidated control, be sufficient to generate global power. These regions include Western Europe, East Asia, the territory of the former Soviet Union, and Southwest Asia. There are three additional aspects to this objective. First, the U.S. must show the leadership necessary to establish and protect a new order that holds the promise of convincing potential competitors that they need not aspire to a greater role, or pursue a more aggressive posture to protect their legitimate interests. Second, in the non-defense areas, we must account sufficiently for the interests of the advanced industrial nations, to discourage them from challenging our leadership or seeking to overturn the established political and economic order. Finally, we must maintain the mechanisms for deterring potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role."

As well, in the Pentagon's Quadrennial Defense Review published in 1997, they had this to say: "The security environment between now and 2015 will also likely be marked by the absence of a global peer competitor, able to challenge the United States militarily around the world as the Soviet Union did during the Cold War. Furthermore, it is likely that no regional power or coalition will amass sufficient conventional military strength in the next 10 to 15 years to defeat our armed forces, once the full military potential of the United States is mobilized and deployed to the regional conflict. The United States is the world's only superpower today and is expected to remain so through the 1997 to 2015 period. In the period beyond 2015, there is the possibility that a regional great power or global peer competitor may emerge. Russia and China are seen by some as having the potential to be such competitors, though their respective futures are quite uncertain."

This is essentially the assessment of what is happening in the world today, straight from the United States' government. They are affirming that they will do what they must, politically and militarily, to remain the world's superpower.

More Than a Decade of Imposed Suffering and Pain by Colonial Powers

The last 14 years have essentially been a classic example of how imperialism works. If we look back in history, we can see that the period we are living in today is in many ways similar to the "scramble for Africa" in the 1800s, or the colonization of Indigenous lands in North America. Even the justification is similar. Hundreds of years ago the imperialist powers justified their brutal colonization of other nations with the idea that they were in fact

have no principles or morals. They will ally themselves with anyone, even the repressive Saudi regime or terrorist organizations, to achieve their goals.

Around the world imperialist countries are bringing in drastic austerity measures. Here in Canada we have seen extensive cuts to health-care, education, unemployment insurance and environmental protection. As well we have seen major attacks on basic democratic rights and rights to free speech, as has happened with the passing of bill C-51. Yet, despite all of these cuts, the money continues to pour in for campaigns like the war in Afghanistan or the bombing of Iraq.



Are We in a Safer World After 14 Years of the New Era of War and Occupation?

But the destruction of the Middle East or North Africa has not made the world a safer place. It has destroyed millions of lives, torn apart countries and supported the development of extremism. I think today, for anyone really paying attention to what is going on in the world, the veil of humanitarian intervention and the war on terrorism has been lifted. Every day new evidence arises that these wars are not being fought in our interests, nor are they being fought in the interests of people in the countries under attack.

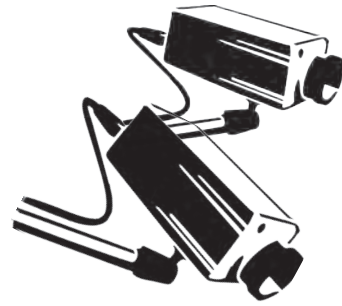
helping Indigenous peoples, bringing them education, technology, and religion. But what Indigenous people across the world ended up with was the takeover of their land and resources and the destruction of their culture. Today we are told that imperialist countries are helping the people of the Middle East by bringing them freedom and democracy. But what they have ended up with are governments that do the bidding of the U.S. and their allies, and the destruction of their countries.

I think the most important question for us today is: who is the real enemy? If you watch the news these days you could be easily led to believe that the biggest threat to humanity today is Russia, China, Iran or whichever government is next in the sights of the United States. But as we have seen, these targets of Russia or China or Iran that we hear about

An important question often arises when we are discussing the need to end these wars, however – the question of what is to be done in the many countries around the world where human and democratic rights are indeed lacking, even before they were invaded by the US and their allies. Unfortunately, I think the answer is at once simple and very, very complex. Ultimately, the only way countries in the third world – oppressed countries – will be able to progress, will be able to develop human rights and democracy, is to attain self-determination – that means no wars, occupations, or foreign meddling or interference. It is not a neat, quick or easy solution – but in the long run neither wars nor well-intentioned aid will solve any country's problems. Self-determination for

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The Battle Against Bill C-51



Is Not Over!

By Thomas Davies

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They opposed it for the obvious reason that it is a massive and unnecessary attack on our democratic rights, human rights and civil liberties. People in Canada have become all too familiar with the government ramming new laws down our throats, but Bill C-51 became the last straw for many, and grassroots organizations and coalitions grew all over Canada. Now that the Bill is passed it is more important than ever that we continue to organize against it, to show to the government that Bill C-51 will not be successful in its main objective of silencing our voices or stopping us from coming together to defend our rights. Our demand must now be, "Repeal Bill C-51!!"

You Cannot Justify Injustice

There are seemingly unending reasons to oppose Bill C-51, and the massive body of writings created in opposition to Bill C-51 is an important demonstration of the broad and engaged opposition. The text from the new petition created to demand a repeal of Bill C-51 by the Working Group to Oppose Bill C-51 in Vancouver offers a good summary of

some of the most important points:

"Bill C-51 drastically attacks the rights, freedoms, liberties and privacy of all Canadians.

It dangerously increases the police powers of Canadian Security Intelligence Services (CSIS) and RCMP, including the power with a warrant from a judge to violate in secret the constitutional and legal rights of any citizen or resident "suspected" of "terrorism," an overly-broad ill-defined notion.

All serious legal and academic opinion in Canada including the Canadian Bar Association, Civil Liberty Associations, Amnesty International, all provincial privacy commissioners and international legal opinion condemns C-51 as a breach of rights, freedoms, liberties and privacy in Canada.

The argument that a 'balance' is needed between 'rights' and 'security' is false; the security of Canadians can only be defended when the political, social, legal and economic rights of all Canadians are guaranteed."

The Need to Continue

Despite the desired "chill" on dissent intended by Bill C-51, the summer months have seen groups continue to educate, organize and mobilize

against the new law. In Vancouver, the Working Group to Oppose Bill C-51 has continued to organize its consecutive weekly picket actions against Bill C-51 in busy transit hubs across the city and the surrounding areas, with next week being the 20th picket in 20 weeks. Anyone who participates can attest to the fact that public outcry against Bill C-51 has not diminished. People continue to ask for more information and for different ways they can oppose Bill C-51.

Now is absolutely the most important time to continue the grassroots public campaign against Bill C-51. The Conservative government has taken advantage of the fact that despite the majority of people in Canada opposing policies like Bill C-51, they have not yet become active and engaged to oppose them. The campaign against Bill C-51 has so far been a major step forward for getting people active and engaged in defending their rights - in coming to rallies, in talking to their friends and families - in become active participants in a political process. History has demonstrated time and time again that this is absolutely necessary if we wish to change anything.

Grassroots organizations cannot afford to not put the brakes on and simply hope for the best in the upcoming Federal Elections. If it was that easy we would

not be in this position! The elections are tentatively slated for October 19, 2015 – over four months away. A lot can change and a lot can happen in four months, and it is possible that all of the hard won organization and momentum we have built so far could be lost if we don't continue to move forward. There must continue to be a political independent movement against Bill C-51 that continues to build on the successes so far. The basis for this is confirmed every time we organize a public action against Bill C-51.

Broader Fight

This grassroots organizing becomes so much more necessary when we realize that Bill C-51 is not the only dreadful law recently passed in our broken and corrupt political system. The Canadian government is preparing itself for a massive attack on the rights of poor and working people, and Bill C-51 is only the tip of the iceberg. If we don't prepare ourselves and organize to defend our rights the losses will be tremendous.

On May 29 of this year, Bill C-24 became law. The Conservative government tried to justify its creation as part of the same fight against “jihadi terrorism” as Bill C-51, but in reality it is just another attack on the most attacked and most vulnerable in Canada. Bill C-24 gives the government the power to revoke the citizenship of anybody with dual citizenship (or even just the possibility of obtaining it). As the *Globe and Mail* national newspaper wrote in their recent editorial condemning Bill C-24, “The consequences are disturbing

and unfair for Canada's 863,000 dual nationals...There is an ugly, xenophobic side to this law...” At minimum Bill C-24 is intended to scare immigrants and refugees into silence, but it also opens once again the door to the deportations of protesters, activists and social justice organizers which were a common practise of the Canadian government during the early years of union organizing in Canada, especially during World War I.

Also, just before taking their summer break, the government rammed through the anti-union Bill C-377. Conservative Party Senators used their majority to overrule their appointed Senate Speaker, Leo Houskas, who had attempted to rule their motion to cut debate and force a final vote on the Bill out of order. Like Bill C-51, the government has failed to provide any real argument for why they want to force unions specifically to open their financial records to the public, especially because unions are already subject to federal, provincial and territorial regulations regarding their finances. As summarized by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, “It's highly discriminatory. Bill C-377 specifically targets labour organizations for highly detailed reporting and



A Busy table at Broadway - City Hall skytrain station collecting signatures against Bill C-51.

disclosure on a public website. No other organization in Canada -- public, private or crown corporations, non-profit organizations, charities, political parties, even fully-publicly funded government departments, ministers, members of parliament or senators -- are required to report and publicly disclose details of their internal finances and affairs to anywhere the same degree unions will have to under Bill C-377.”

It's another example of a deliberate antagonistic attack on labour unions, which have traditionally been a part of leading the organizing efforts for the major victories of poor and working people in Canada, and continue to exist as an important force which stands in the way of a complete assault on our living conditions by the government of Canada and its big business allies.

Moving Forward

As we discussed in the last issue of *Fire This Time*, the battle against Bill C-51 is part of a broader historical effort by poor and working people to defend and extend our rights in the face of constant attacks. Regardless of any election outcome, this fight must continue. We must acknowledge the very real threat to our rights and livelihoods if we allow the government to force us down their current path. They wouldn't be attacking our rights if they weren't afraid of what happens when we use them. So let's make use of them! Let's continue organizing and coming together, to oppose Bill C-51, as well as any attack on anybody's rights!



May 11, 2015 at Joyce skytrain station one of the weekly pickets to scrap Bill C-51 organized by the Working Group to Stop Bill C-51 in Vancouver.

Stop Lies & Deceptions!



How Mainstream Media Falsifies the Truth About Cuba

By Tamara Hansen

The news: 'Historic' survey of Cubans living in Cuba released!

In the first weeks of April 2015, a flurry of headlines sourcing a new poll of Cubans living in Cuba took over the news. According to a Google news search over 7,000 articles were found citing the poll. Mainstream media was all abuzz: The Washington Post, CTV, TIME Magazine, Reuters, Miami Herald, Yahoo News, USA Today and many others all published articles about the findings of the poll.

Headlines analyzing the details of the poll ranged from the obvious, "Poll shows vast majority of Cubans welcome closer ties with US", or "Poll: Cubans expect US detente to improve economic lives", to the scandalous, "Obama Almost Twice as Popular in Cuba Than in US, Poll Says", or "Despite Optimism, Many Cubans Still Wish To Leave, Secret Poll Finds", or "Obama more popular than the Castros in Cuba", or "Historic poll: Facebook is 20x more popular than Twitter in Cuba."

The only surprising headline I could find in the mainstream news that bucked the trend taking the poll results in a whole new direction was from the New Republic who proclaimed, "Cubans Are More Satisfied With Their Political System Than Americans Are".

How could one "historic poll" lead to so many new conclusions?

Who released the poll and what was the goal?

Upon investigation, it turns out that the "Fusion poll" (as it is commonly referred to in many articles) was conducted by Bendixen & Amadi International, a public opinion research firm located in Miami, Florida, on behalf of Univision Noticias/Fusion in collaboration with The Washington Post.

From an article published on fusion.net entitled, "Historic poll: Obama is nearly twice as popular in Cuba as he is in the U.S." they explain, "The door-to-door poll, considered the most comprehensive and largest independent survey in Cuba in more than 50 years, was conducted by a team of local Cuban interviewers led by Miami-based research firm Bendixen & Amadi. The poll was carried out without the authorization of the Cuban government between March 17-27 in all 13 provinces of the island, including the capital city of Havana."

While this polling firm and poll methodology (explained in documents published by Bendixen & Amadi International) seem to pass the initial threshold for a valid survey, there are some critical questions not mentioned in their "methodology" document or in their published report. After reading carefully through their documents I was left with many questions...

- It is unclear how many Cubans refused to be interviewed or were not interested in participating.
- The company claimed to have contacted each "randomly selected" candidate 3 times for an interview, but gives no data on how many people they were unable to interview after 3 attempts or the general response rate.

- The interviews were conducted in Spanish, but I was unable to find a Spanish version of the report. This makes it impossible to tell how accurately the questions were translated for the English report.
- Their "Introduction" on the survey reads: "I would like to ask you a few questions about some important issues. I assure you that I am not selling anything and that the survey will only take a few minutes. Your responses will remain strictly confidential." But it is unclear if these are the only things their survey team said to introduce the poll. Did the field team tell people this was a "secret poll" not sanctioned by the government? Did they say they were representing Miami-based Bendixen & Amadi, or "Univision Noticias/Fusion" or the Washington Post?

Where to find the answers...

Interestingly, the Washington Post published an article exposing the answers to some of these questions on April 8, 2015. At the same time the poll was released, their article titled, "Surveying Cubans under the Castro government" gave some insights that were nowhere to be found on the Fusion website or Bendixen & Amadi International.

First, the title for the article, "Surveying Cubans under the Castro government" is clearly building up the idea that surveying Cubans is different than surveying people in any other part of the world. The bias of the Washington Post and the poll they paid for is evident in the first sentence of their article which asks, "How do you conduct

a reliable public opinion poll in a closely monitored society where political dissent is strictly repressed?”

If the goal of their survey is to go and find out what the people of Cuba think about their government and the government of the United States, doesn't this question seem to suggest that in the end they already know what answers they are looking for? Cubans are dissatisfied, want change and are repressed in a “closely monitored society where political dissent is strictly repressed”. Right?

In his article Washington Post journalist, Peyton M. Craighill, boasts that their poll was, “designed and executed without the authorization of the Cuban government” as if this is somehow a positive or legitimizing point!

“Interviews were conducted by Cuban residents personally trained by senior B&A survey researchers.” How much did they pay these people? Did they tell the Cubans working for them that the poll they were doing was “carried out without the authorization of the Cuban government”?

Finally, the most important information, again not found in the poll or its methodology document, only in this one article from The Washington Post notes that, “Among all the households sampled for an interview, 39 percent completed one.” That means 61% of people they asked to do the poll did not participate. Why is this not a headline? ‘61% of Cubans asked to take our poll refused’ I guess it would have been harder for Fusion, Univision and The Washington Post to have their prestigious and ‘historic’ poll taken seriously if this was one of their

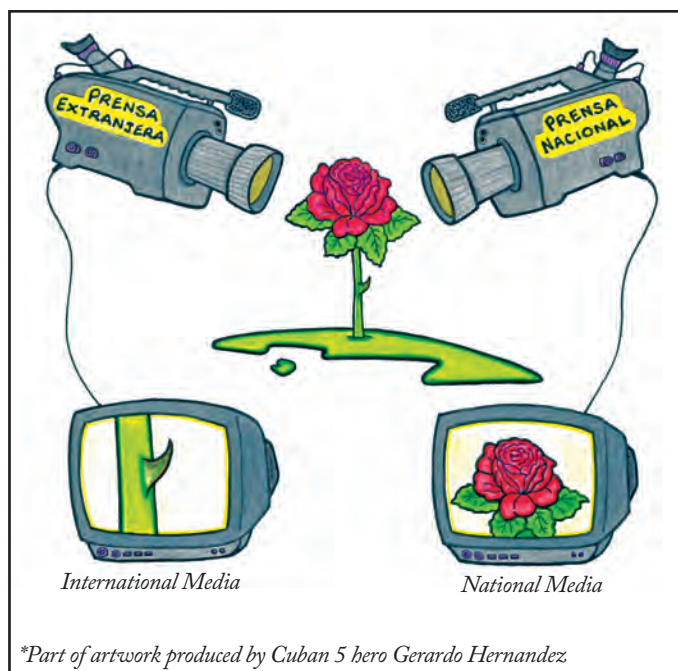
key findings.

What's in the poll?

So far I have not even explained what was in the poll, other than the headlines pulled from the results. In many ways the contents of the poll are of secondary importance, because this survey and poll were not designed to be fair. They were designed with pre-determined answers in mind, which the Washington Post journalist exposed with his musings, “How do you conduct a reliable public opinion poll in a closely monitored society where political dissent is strictly repressed?”

However, I would like to quickly examine the article from the New Republic that I mentioned in the first section of this article, which is again entitled, “Cubans Are More Satisfied With Their Political System Than Americans Are.”

The article takes the poll findings in a different direction than the rest of the mainstream media around the world. Journalist Joel Gillin writes, “According to a January 2014 Gallup poll, 65 percent of Americans are “dissatisfied with the nation's system of government and how well it works.” Meanwhile, 52 percent of Cubans are dissatisfied



with their political system, according to the new poll by Univision/Fusion.

More than two-thirds of Cubans—68 percent—are satisfied with their health care system. About 66 percent of Americans said the same in a November 2014 Gallup poll.

Seventy-two percent of Cubans are satisfied with their education system, while an August 2014 Gallup poll found that less than half of Americans—48 percent—are “completely” or “somewhat” satisfied with the quality of K-12 education.”

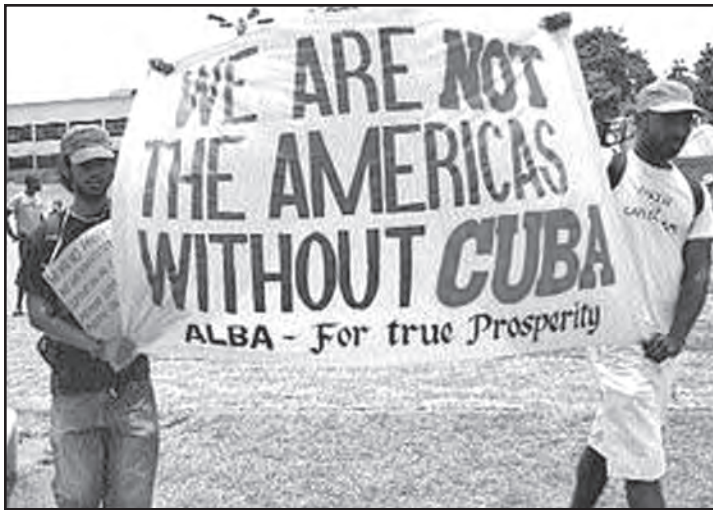
So while the questionable statistics in the Univision/Fusion poll are meant to make Cubans seem unsatisfied, miserable and repressed when they stand on their own. When put side-by-side with statistics about how Americans feel about their political system and social services we get a more balanced look and realizing that even if we accepted these numbers as fact (which I do not, based on the holes and bias mentioned above) they do not say anything as drastic about the situation in Cuba as the mainstream media headlines would like us to believe.

International Context since December 17, 2014

The reason this article will not look too closely at the contents of the poll, is first because of the stated bias with which the Washington Post began this venture and second because this poll is clearly being used as a tool by the mainstream media to



Cuba Participates in the 9th ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America) Summit, Venezuela, March 18 2015.



make a particular point about Cuba. Only the New Republic article chose to deviate from the story that Univision/Fusion and The Washington Post wanted everyone to read.

The next question we need to ask is why did the Washington Post and Univision/Fusion choose now to invest in a 'historic poll' about how Cubans see the present and future of their country and the U.S.?

On December 17, 2014 U.S. President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro both announced the first steps towards reestablishing diplomatic ties between the US and Cuba after over 50 years of US hostility towards Cuba.

Since December 17, 2014 the U.S. has made several openings towards Cuba. On March 29, 2015 the Obama administration officially removed Cuba from their list of "state sponsors of terror", a very unjustified label the U.S. had slapped on Cuba and also one of the road-blocks to re-establishing diplomatic relations between Washington and Havana.

In April 2015, Cuba was welcomed to the Summit of the Americas hosted in Panama by the Organization of American States (OAS) an organization with 35 member states including countries in North, Central and South America. The Cuban government had been banned from participating in the OAS Summits for 47 years based mainly in the insistence of the U.S. government that Cuba did not belong based on it being a communist country and its desire to isolate Cuba. While the ban was lifted in 2009, it was only this year that Cuba finally took its seat at the table.

Then on July 1, 2015 U.S. President Barack Obama said, "Today, I can announce

that the United States has agreed to formally re-establish diplomatic relations with the Republic of Cuba, and re-open embassies in our respective countries. This is a historic step forward in our efforts to normalize relations with the Cuban government and people, and begin a new chapter with our neighbors in the

Americas."

So we have seen since December 2014 many important moves by the U.S. government to forge a new relationship with Cuba, but what are the changes based on?

A new era of U.S./Cuba relations - Why now?

Over the past 10 years or so, it has become clear that United States government has become more and more isolated from the rest of the Americas, and even the rest of the world, in its policy towards Cuba. While in the 1960s, just after the triumph of the Cuban revolution, the U.S. policy to isolate Cuba was echoed by every country in Latin America except Mexico, today the U.S. policy of isolating Cuba has led to the isolation of the United States itself. The U.S. which is used to being master of the world, has found itself being chastised by other nations for its harmful and outdated policy towards Cuba.

So let's get back to the question: why did

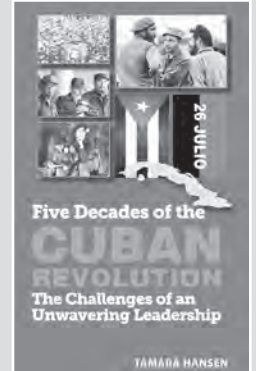
Battle of Ideas Press

5 Decades of the Cuban Revolution The Challenges of an Unwavering Leadership

By Tamara Hansen

"The battles Cuba has fought have not been easy. Some were physical battles, such as the battle against bandits in the Escambray Mountains or the Bay of Pigs invasion. However, most were not battles of physical might, but battles of ideas. But with every twist and turn, every up and down Fidel has been one of the first leaders to say, 'this way forward' or 'we made a wrong turn, we must change course.'"

Tamara Hansen is the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). She is also an editorial board member of The Fire This Time newspaper. She has travelled to Cuba ten times and has written extensively on Cuban politics since 2003.



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the Washington Post and Univision/Fusion choose now to invest in a 'historic poll' about how Cubans see the present and future of their country and the U.S.?

It is true that these new moves towards better U.S.-Cuba relations are important for the Cuban people and the Cuban government. However, one has to look at what has been going on between the U.S. and Cuba



Billboard in Cuba reads "200 million children in the world sleep in the streets today, not one is Cuban".

over the past 50 years to really grasp what is happening today. Over the last 50 years the various U.S. administrations have dedicated themselves to a single task in Cuba – to overthrow the victorious 1959 revolution led by Fidel Castro. They have planned this through assassination attempts, the Bay of Pigs invasion, the National Endowment for Democracy and their “democracy building projects”, the sabotage of Cuban agriculture, the payment of ‘dissident’ groups, and most importantly their economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba. The U.S. blockade was meant to starve Cubans into giving up on their revolution and to accept U.S. hegemony over their island.

All of the United States measures against Cuba have failed, and despite even the collapse of the Soviet Union, one of the most challenging periods, Cuba has thrived. Indeed, Cuba has become more popular, making allies and signing agreements across Latin America and around the world. Just this year Cuba has become known as a world leader in the fight against Ebola in West Africa sending hundreds of Cuban doctors to fight the epidemic. Then on June 30, 2015 the World Health Organization declared Cuba the first country in the world to eliminate the mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis. Cuba has Health and Human Development figures that rival that of many industrialized countries due to great advances in its free education and healthcare systems. Life inside Cuba is a challenge, but very dynamic from its world-famous jazz, to baseball, to salsa, to cigars and beaches.

While the Obama administration is making steps towards Cuba, they have not given up

on their policy of “regime change” for Cuba, meaning overthrowing the revolution and its gains. This also means they are not interested in leaving Guantánamo Bay, Cuba where the U.S. has its military base and prison, world renowned for torturing its prisoners. It means they are not interested in finally ending their blockade against Cuba despite the fact that the United Nations General Assembly has resoundingly condemned the U.S. blockade 23 times in the last 23 years.

So how can the U.S. government and the mainstream media make sure that they get enough support for renewing diplomatic ties with Cuba, while at the same time keep the general population skeptical about the Cuban people and government?

One method is to release a ‘historic’ poll of Cubans living in Cuba, reaffirming that despite all of the positive news coverage you have heard about Cuba in the last year, Cubans are still “closely monitored society where political dissent is strictly repressed”. They make sure that the poll questions will get the answer that they started with. Then publicize the results around the world, to a mainstream media that will take that data in whatever context they give them and not bother to look outside the box or analyze the content.

Where do we go from here?



From an article published on fusion.net entitled, “Historic poll: Obama is nearly twice as popular in Cuba as he is in the U.S.” they explain, “What’s clear is that tidy friend-or-foe days of the cold war have since been replaced by something messier, modern and more honest.” This might be the reporter’s opinion after reading the survey results, but all it shows is that these people have never spent any time in Cuba. The so-called cold war “friend-or-foe”/black and white/“you are either with us or against us” is never how the Cuban people or the Cuban government have seen the United States. The Cuban revolution has always distinguished between the American people and the American government. Cuba has always been a warm and welcoming place for Americans to visit. It has been the U.S. government with this black and white mentality, forcing travel restrictions on its own people, worried Americans will travel to Cuba and be inspired by revolutionary Cuba.

This is why the U.S. and the mainstream media are not interested in really understanding the feelings of the Cuban people during this historic period of change. They are not interested in sharing with people in the United States a deeper understanding of the challenges and gains made by the Cuban people and their government since the revolution triumphed in 1959. They are too afraid that poor and working people in the U.S. might see something exciting about the path forged by the Cuban revolution – a path that has meant free healthcare, free education, jobs, culture and dignity – all things poor and working people in the U.S. are fighting for today.



THE UNITED STATES AND THE ISLAMIC STATE

*By Manuel Yepe**

Contrary to what is widespread in Western corporate media which denies that the United States and NATO supported the Islamic State (ISIS) and describing any statement in this regard as “pure conspiracy theory”, on 18th May, Judicial Watch published a selection of recently declassified documents –obtained from the US Defense and State Departments- which reveal that since 2012 the US and NATO admitted in their own documents that they had supported al-Qaeda and ISIS in Iraq and Syria.

The documents demolish the Western “official story” which had maintained that, since the beginning of the Syrian crisis until today, the “rebellion” is autochthonous in character and part of the action by freedom-loving moderates, advocates of democracy, in that nation.

The declassified documents reveal unequivocally that “the Salafists, the Muslim Brotherhood and al-Qaeda were the main forces leading the insurgency in Syria.”

They also reveal that “The West, the Gulf states and Turkey constitute the opposition in Syria; while Russia, China and Iran support the local government.” According to the documents “al Qaeda supported the Syrian opposition from the beginning, both ideologically and through the media ...”

The documents show that the crisis in Syria was never a rebellion by moderate fighters for democracy, but from the beginning it was a concerted action by Muslim Brotherhood fighters and al-Qaeda (al Qaeda in Iraq /Al-Nusra Front).

The documents state that the opposition forces in Syria were trying to control the eastern areas (Hasaka and Der Zor), together with Iraq’s western provinces (Anbar and Mosul), plus neighboring regions in the Turkish borders. The Western countries, the Gulf states and

Turkey supported these goals.

If the United States and its NATO allies supported an opposition in Syria which included al-Qaeda and ISIS, it is clear that Washington did have a foundation of partnership and alliance with these terrorist

forces. This is also confirmed by the acceptance by the US of a plan to create within Syria “buffer zones” and “safe heavens” along the lines of the Libyan model.

The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria or the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham, or just Islamic State (ISIS), is a jihadist militant group self-proclaimed a “caliphate.”

In March 2015, the organization had control over a territory of Iraq and Syria in which 10 million people live. It also has limited territorial authority in Libya and Nigeria. It operates, or has branches, in other parts of the world including Southeast Asia.

ISIS gained notoriety when it pushed out the forces of the Iraqi government from the major cities in the west of that country. In Syria, it launched attacks against government forces and some of the factions involved in the local civil war.

Iraq’s territorial losses almost caused the collapse of the Iraqi government which

had requested the resumption of the US military intervention in Iraq. For this the Iraqi government had the support of the US high command and of members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee who claimed this was in response to the resurgence of the Sunni insurgency ... and of Al Qaeda.

ISIS emerged in 1999; joined al Qaeda in October 2004 and declared itself an Islamic state of Iraq in 2006. It was formally separated from al Qaeda in February 2014 and in June of that year proclaimed itself a caliphate. Until November of the same year it made territorial claims against Libya, Egypt, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Saudi, Yemen, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Carefully tying up all the loose ends, we find some answers to the inexplicable situation that ISIS, al Qaeda, and their accomplices were able to act with so much impunity. The corporate-financial elite who exercise the real power in the United States created them and have been funding them to serve their immediate interests, such as the present war against Syria.

For the most qualified analysts of the current events in the Middle East it is clear that the US target is to isolate the Syrian government to “prevent Shia expansion and curb Iranian influence”. This is part of a larger purpose (destroying Iran) and a final goal which would be the confrontation with Russia and China.



**Manuel E. Yepe, is a lawyer, economist and journalist. He is a professor at the Higher Institute of International Relations in Havana. He was Cuba’s ambassador to Romania, general director of the Prensa Latina agency; vice president of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television; founder and national director of the Technological Information System (TIPS) of the United Nations Program for Development in Cuba, and secretary of the Cuban Movement for the Peace and Sovereignty of the Peoples.*



LOS ESTADOS UNIDOS Y EL ESTADO ISLÁMICO

*** EN ESPAÑOL ***

*Por Manuel Yepe**

Contradiendo a los medios corporativos occidentales que niegan que Estados Unidos y la OTAN hayan apoyado al Estado Islámico (ISIS) y califican cualquier afirmación en este sentido como “pura teoría de la conspiración”, el 18 de mayo último, Judicial Watch publicó una selección de documentos desclasificados recientemente, originados por los Departamento norteamericanos de Defensa y de Estado, que revelan que ya en 2012, Estados Unidos y la OTAN habían admitido, en sus propios documentos, haber apoyado a al-Qaeda y a ISIS en Irak y en Siria.

Los documentos demuestran la “historia oficial” de Occidente, que mantenía que desde el origen de la crisis de Siria hasta el día de hoy la “rebelión” es de carácter autóctono y parte de la acción de moderados amantes de la libertad, defensores de la democracia en esa nación. Los documentos desclasificados inequívocamente revelan que fueron “los salafistas, la Hermandad Musulmana y al Qaeda las principales fuerzas conducentes a la insurgencia en Siria”. Que “Occidente, con los países del Consejo de Cooperación del Golfo (CCG) y el apoyo de Turquía constituyen la oposición en Siria; mientras que Rusia, China e Irán son los que apoyan al gobierno local”.

Según afirman los documentos “al Qaeda apoyó a la oposición siria desde el principio, tanto ideológicamente como con sus medios de

comunicación...”

También demuestran que la crisis en Siria no fue jamás una rebelión de moderados luchadores por la democracia, sino que desde el inicio fue una acción concertada de combatientes de la Hermandad Musulmana y de al-Qaeda (al Qaeda en Irak/Al-Nusra Fonctionnement).

Los documentos afirman que las fuerzas de oposición en Siria trataban de controlar las zonas orientales (Hasaka y Der Zor), junto a las provincias occidentales iraquíes (Mosul y Anbar), además de las regiones vecinas en las fronteras turcas. Ente tanto, los países occidentales, los Estados del Consejo de Cooperación del Golfo y Turquía apoyaban estos propósitos.

Si Estados Unidos y sus aliados de la OTAN apoyaban en Siria una oposición que incluía al-Qaeda y Estados Islámico, es evidente que Washington sí tenía una base de asociación y alianza con esas fuerzas terroristas; algo que también corrobora la aceptación por Estados Unidos de un plan para crear “zonas de amortiguamiento” y “zonas seguras”, según el modelo libio, dentro de Siria.

El Estado islámico de Irak y el Levante, también conocido como el Estado islámico

de Irak y Siria o el Estado islámico de Irak y ash-Sham, o simplemente Estado Islámico (ISIS), es un grupo militante jihadista autoproclamado “califato”.

En marzo de 2015 esta organización tenía control sobre un territorio de Irak y Siria en el que habitan 10 millones de personas, así como con autoridad territorial limitada en Libia y Nigeria. Opera o tiene filiales también en otras partes del mundo, incluyendo Asia

Suroriental.

Estado Islámico cobró notoriedad cuando desplazó a las fuerzas del gobierno iraquí de las principales ciudades del occidente del país y, en Siria, realizó ataques contra las fuerzas del gobierno y algunas facciones involucradas en la Guerra Civil local.

Las pérdidas territoriales de Irak casi provocaron el colapso del gobierno iraquí que solicitó la reanudación de la intervención militar de Estados Unidos en Irak y contaron para ello con apoyo de los altos mandos militares estadounidenses y miembros de la Comisión de asuntos exteriores de la Cámara del Congreso que alegaron al hacerlo que era en respuesta al resurgimiento de la insurgencia sunita...y de al-Qaeda.

Estados Islámico surgió en 1999; se unió a al Qaeda en octubre de 2004 y se declaró un estado islámico de Irak en 2006. Se separó formalmente de al Qaeda en febrero de 2014 y en junio de ese año se proclamó Califato. Hasta noviembre del propio año ha dado a conocer

reclamaciones territoriales contra Libia, Egipto, Argelia, Arabia Saudi, Yemen, Afganistán y Paquistán.

Atando cuidadosamente todos los cabos sueltos se encuentran algunas respuestas a la inexplicable situación de que Estado Islámico, al Qaeda y sus cómplices hayan sido capaces de actuar con tanta impunidad. La élite corporativo-financiera que ejerce el poder real superior en Estados Unidos es la que les ha creado y les ha estado financiando en función de sus intereses inmediatos, como es hoy la guerra contra Siria.

Para los expertos más calificados de la actualidad en el Medio Oriente es evidente que el objetivo puntual estadounidense es aislar al gobierno de Siria para “evitar la expansión de los chiítas y frenar la influencia de Irán”, un propósito que forma parte de otro mayor (destruir a Irán) y un objetivo final que sería la confrontación con Rusia y con China.

**Manuel E. Yepe Menendez es periodista y se desempeña como Profesor adjunto en el Instituto Superior de las Relaciones Internacionales de La Habana.*



RACISM & POVERTY: TWO DISEASES OF DECAYING CAPITALISM IN THE U.S.

By Alison Bodine

continued from cover

Because, for too many children, childhood is but an illusion, as it was for Tamir Rice, a 12-year old boy, doing what boys have been doing for over a century: playing with a toy gun, becomes a death sentence.

Because every hand and every face is turned against them, as futures are as bleak as lunar landscapes. “We Can’t Breathe!” they howl. But we can’t hear them. The neo-liberal state is too busy, choking them to death.”

– Mumia Abu Jamal, Black political prisoner held in U.S. prison since 1982, Prison Radio Broadcast, December, 2014

That racism exists in the U.S. Against black and Latinos, and in Canada against Indigenous people, should not be a shock to anyone. The names of Oscar Grant, Michael Brown, Tamir Rice and Eric Garner, just some of the many victims of racist police brutality, have now been repeated hundreds of times over in major media. Images of Charlotte, South Carolina where a racist murdered nine black people in cold blood inside of a historic black church, have appeared on the TV screen of nearly every household. Even with all of this, the violence and brutality that has been shown is only a fraction of that which exists in the United States, where someone is killed by police every eight hours, the majority of which are black or brown people.

This violence and brutality are symptoms of the disease of racism, and the disease of racism cannot be discussed without also discussing another disease which gives it horrible strength – poverty. Racism and poverty constitute two diseases that are growing and coming to the surface in the

United States in the face of decaying capitalism.

Capitalist Crisis & Growing poverty in the U.S.

One way that poverty in the U.S. can be examined is by looking at the effects of the financial crisis that came to a head in 2008, known now as the “Great Recession.” By the time the recession, which ran officially from 2007-2009, was over 1.2 million people in the United States had lost their homes and 8.7 million jobs had been lost.



white owner and his black slaves on a cotton plantation.

Nearly seven years later the U.S. economy is no longer considered to be in a recession – at least technically - but its damaging effects on the working and poor population have not been erased. According to an article from CNBC by Daniel Alpert a managing partner at Westwood Capital, “Median household real incomes have not recovered and jobs created have been at lower wages than previously existing jobs. The pace of job growth has slowed significantly this year, with the percentage of the employable population actually working near a 35 year low.”

Looking beyond what can be considered the effects of the Great Recession, there are other significant markers of an economy that does not serve poor and working people. The wealth gap in the U.S. has been increasing significantly since as far back as 1978. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the average top CEOs now make over 300 times what typical workers earn. Real wages have stagnated, with the Pew Research Center reporting that, after adjusting for inflation, the average wage today buys you no more than it did in 1979, and less than it did in 1973. To match the average hourly wage in 1973, a person would have to be making \$22.41/hour.

Simply put, according to the U.S. Census Bureau in 2014 more than 45 million people, or 14.5% of the U.S. population live below the poverty line (an income of less than \$24, 817 for a family of four with two children under 18).

Poverty in Black and Latino Communities

When the U.S. poverty rate is broken down into poverty in Black and Latino communities, the situation becomes even direr and the relationship between poverty and racism clearer.

“We don’t have ‘equal rights, we have the rhetoric of equal rights used by the elites and the state to camouflage the real situation of Black Americans — one of dire, unrelenting hell. Equal rights would not produce the glaringly unequal outcomes that lead to mass incarceration, poverty and death.”

– Mumia Abu Jamal, March 2015, interview for



Walter Gadsden, 17, attacked by police, during civil rights protest in Birmingham, Alabama. May 3, 1963



California State Prison. Los Angeles, 2006.



Line up for free Thanksgiving meal. Los Angeles, California. November 24, 2010.

than a black household. The foreclosure crisis also hit black families the hardest, for one, because their wealth was more concentrated in their homes (and less in the stock market or retirement plans), and secondly because the sub-prime mortgages and high-interest loans were specifically targeted towards the Black community.

How poverty affects every aspect of life

The destruction of poverty on human life and development runs through all indicators for quality of life in the U.S. With the increased rate of poverty in the Black and Latino community, there is a subsequent consequence on health, education and employment. Both racism in society and institutional racism promoted by the state and U.S. government feed off of this lowered quality of life, keeping Black and Latino people in a cycle of poverty and maintaining the pool of cheap and desperate labour that the capitalist system needs to exist.

A few statistics can give us an overview of the situation for Black people in the U.S.:

- Life expectancy - The life expectancy of black men is 71 years, compared to 76 years for white men. (2009)
- Infant mortality - For black mothers, the infant mortality rate is 12.4 infant deaths per 1,000 live births, for white mothers this rate is 5.3/1,000 live births. (2009, Urban Institute)
- Education - Across the U.S. the high school graduation rate for black people is 69%, for Latinos, 73% and for white people, 86%. (2011-2012, National Center for Education Statistics)



Police officers choke Eric Garner to death. Staten Island, New York. July 17, 2014.

Sputnik News

As compared to the general poverty rate of 14.5%, the black poverty rate is 27.2% and the Latino poverty rate 23.5%. The poverty rate of households headed by black women is even more staggering, at 42.5%. (all statistics from 2014, U.S. Census Bureau)

This poverty divide based on race was increased with the Great Recession, which disproportionately targeted Black and Latino communities. For example, in 2009, the Pew Research Center found that the average wealth of a white household was 20 times higher

- **Unemployment:** As of February, 2015, the official employment rate for black people was 10.4%, for Latinos, 6.6% and for white people 4.0% (Bureau of Labor Statistics)

- A black college graduate has the same chances of getting a job as a white person who dropped out of

Let America be America again.
Let it be the dream it used to be.
Let it be the pioneer on the plain
Seeking a home where he himself is free.

(America never was America to me.)

Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed-
Let it be that great strong land of love
Where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme
That any man be crushed by one above.

(It never was America to me.)

O, let my land be a land where Liberty
Is crowned with no false patriotic wreath,
But opportunity is real, and life is free,
Equality is in the air we breathe.

(There's never been equality for me,
Nor freedom in this "homeland of the free.")

Say, who are you that mumbles in the dark?
And who are you that draws your veil across the stars?

I am the poor white, fooled and pushed apart,
I am the Negro bearing slavery's scars.
I am the red man driven from the land,
I am the immigrant clutching the hope I seek-
And finding only the same old stupid plan
Of dog eat dog, of mighty crush the weak.

I am the young man, full of strength and hope,
Tangled in that ancient endless chain
Of profit, power, gain, of grab the land!
Of grab the gold! Of grab the ways of satisfying need!
Of work the men! Of take the pay!
Of owning everything for one's own greed!

I am the farmer, bondsman to the soil.
I am the worker sold to the machine.
I am the Negro, servant to you all.
I am the people, humble, hungry, mean-
Hungry yet today despite the dream.
Beaten yet today-O, Pioneers!
I am the man who never got ahead,
The poorest worker bartered through the years.

Yet I'm the one who dreamt our basic dream
In the Old World while still a serf of kings,
Who dreamt a dream so strong, so brave, so true,
That even yet its mighty daring sings
In every brick and stone, in every furrow turned
That's made America the land it has become.
O, I'm the man who sailed those early seas
In search of what I meant to be my home-
For I'm the one who left dark Ireland's shore,
And Poland's plain, and England's grassy lea,
And torn from Black Africa's strand I came
To build a "homeland of the free."

The free?

Who said the free? Not me?
Surely not me? The millions on relief today?

Let America Be America Again

By Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

A Black activist, poet, novelist and playwright and leader of the Harlem Renaissance movement

The millions shot down
when we strike?
The millions who have
nothing for our pay?
For all the dreams we've
dreamed
And all the songs we've sung
And all the hopes we've held
And all the flags we've hung,
The millions who have
nothing for our pay-
Except the dream that's
almost dead today.

O, let America be America
again-
The land that never has been
yet-
And yet must be--the land
where every man is free.
The land that's mine--the
poor man's, Indian's, Negro's,
ME-
Who made America,
Whose sweat and blood,
whose faith and pain,
Whose hand at the foundry,
whose plow in the rain,
Must bring back our mighty
dream again.

Sure, call me any ugly name
you choose-
The steel of freedom does
not stain.
From those who live like
leeches on the people's lives,
We must take back our land
again,
America!

O, yes,
I say it plain,
America never was America
to me,
And yet I swear this oath-
America will be!

Out of the rack and ruin of
our gangster death,
The rape and rot of graft,
and stealth, and lies,
We, the people, must
redeem
The land, the mines, the
plants, the rivers.
The mountains and the
endless plain-
All, all the stretch of these
great green states-
And make America again!

Continued on page 31

LIFT THE U.S. BLOCKADE ON CUBA!

HUMANITARIAN AID FOR CUBA EN ROUTE WITH THE 2015 CARAVAN TO CUBA!

By Azza Rojbi

Before 1959, Cuba was governed by a series of dictators imposed by the US government.

U.S. Companies owned over 50% of Cuba's railways, over 70% of its land and 90% of Cuba's telephone and electricity services. The Cuban people lived in poverty and hunger while the resources and wealth of their country were plundered and funnelled outside of the island.

Led by Fidel Castro and other revolutionary fighters such as Ernesto Che Guevara and Raul Castro the Cuban people stood up against the U.S. backed dictator Fulgencio Batista and succeeded in overthrowing Batista on January 1, 1959. A new Cuban government was formed to represent the interest of Cuban people and right to self-determination of the Cuba against the U.S. Domination and exploitation.

Soon after the triumph of the Cuban revolution, the U.S. ceased all diplomatic relations with Cuba and imposed a full economic blockade against the island. This inhuman blockade has so far cost the Cuban economy \$1.2 trillion and continue to cause shortages of medicine, food and other necessary supplies to the Cuban people. People from around the world have been demanding an end to the U.S. blockade against Cuba, including the United Nations general assembly which in 2014, for the 23rd year, voted to condemn the blockade of

Cuba by United States.

Building People to People relations

Every summer since 1992, the Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba, a Cuba solidarity project organized by the Inter-religious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) in the United States, breaks the U.S. blockade and travel ban against Cuba. Brightly painted school buses, full of Humanitarian aid people travel through up to 100 cities in Canada, U.S. and Mexico raising awareness about the U.S. blockade against Cuba. The Humanitarian aid collected is openly taken through the Canada/U.S. Border then the U.S./Mexico border and then delivered to Cuba. Caravanistas, as people call them, participate in a educational and cultural

program in Cuba and then return to the U.S. declaring that they have been to the island nation.

Over the past 25 Caravans thousands of participants and over 30,000 tons of humanitarian aid have been brought to Cuba, building a 'people-to-people' foreign policy based on mutual respect, solidarity and friendship between the people of the U.S., Canada and Cuba.

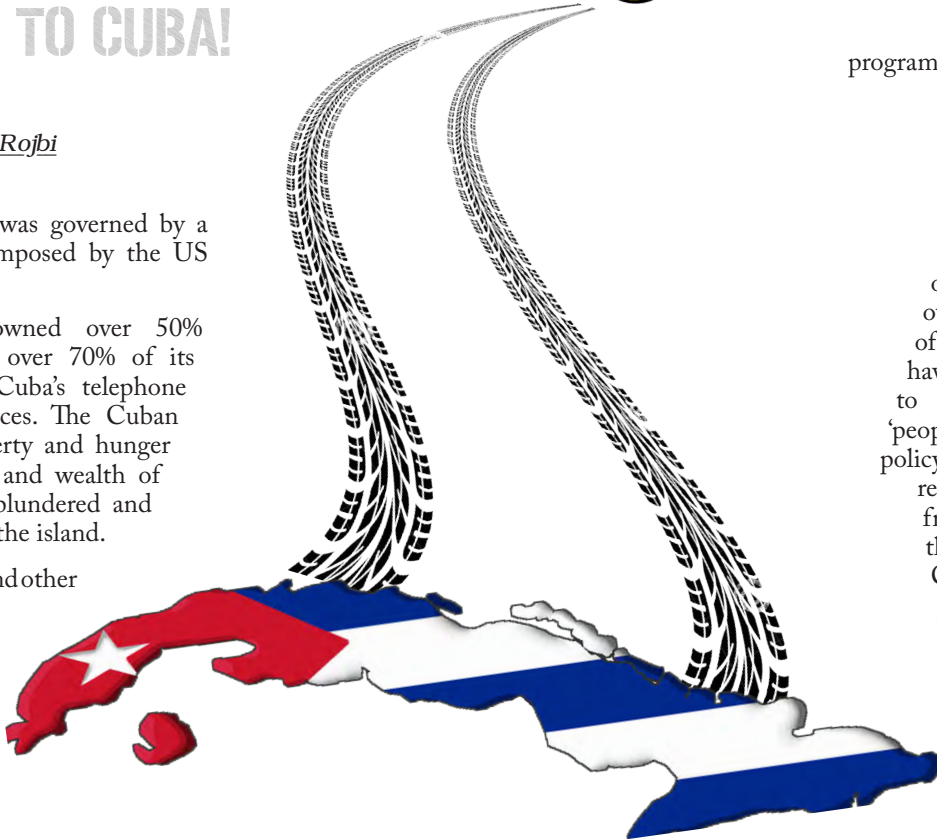
On December 17, 2014, U.S. President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raul Castro both announced the first steps towards reestablishing

diplomatic ties between the U.S. and Cuba after over 50 years of U.S. hostility towards Cuba. However, despite ongoing negotiations and some important steps forward, the U.S. government is still refusing to lift its cruel and inhuman blockade against Cuba.

In the lights of this new diplomatic developments, the 26th annual Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba is one of the most important ever as we need to increase our work and pressure on the U.S. government to end its blockade on Cuba. This year's caravan kicked off with a successful U.S./Canada Border Crossing. The following is a report from Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba on its border crossing event.

Victory at B.C./Washington State Border

Just before 5pm on Saturday, June 27,



2015, a van full of humanitarian aid for Cuba crossed the Canada/U.S. border, breaking the illegal, immoral and unjust U.S. blockade against Cuba! This great victory was accompanied by a loud, colourful and energetic rally at the Peace Arch border crossing, which had supporters of Cuba from both British Columbia and Washington State chanting, "Lift the Blockade on Cuba NOW! Abajo el Bloqueo!" as the van full of humanitarian aid entered the U.S. customs area. Our united voices ensured that the all of the humanitarian aid, including wheelchairs, walkers, canes, sewing machines, hand tools and sports equipment continued on the road to Cuba as part of the 26th Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba.

The victory this year was especially important because all of the humanitarian aid crossed through the Peace Arch Park border crossing, despite the initial objections of the U.S. border officials. In the last few years activists bringing humanitarian aid through the border have been told that no aid would be allowed to pass through the Peace Arch Park border crossing. Initially, this year was no different, with the border officials declaring "You know we will not let you through here, why did you bother coming?" But Caravan supporters stood their ground and in the end all of the humanitarian aid was allowed to cross!

This year is also an important year for the Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba as after over 50 years of hostile U.S. policies towards Cuba, a new dialogue between the U.S. and Cuba has begun. However, despite this opening, the over 50-year old criminal U.S. blockade on Cuba remains in full force. Now it is more important than ever for people from around the world to demand an end to this cruel policy and increase our efforts to end to the U.S. blockade against Cuba.

Before the victory at the border, supporters of Cuba from across Washington State and B.C. gathered in Peace Arch Park for a potluck picnic complete with delicious food, poetry, live music and a featured speaker, Nino Pagliccia,

MC Tamara Hansen opened up the border crossing event.



Nino Pagliccia, editor of the book "Cuba Solidarity in Canada".



Inspiring music performed by Maria Luisa Melendez.



Group photo after the border crossing victory.



Editor of the new book "Cuba Solidarity in Canada: 5 Decades of People-to-People Foreign Relations" (Friesen Press, 2014). The MC of the day, Tamara Hansen, the coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC), introduced a diverse program that began with poetry from Vancouver organizer Shakeel Lochan and Ruth Caspell from Nanaimo, BC, who read a poem from Cuban 5 hero Antonio Guerrero. Next there were words from Judy Zeh of the Seattle/Cuba Friendship Committee and a first time Caravanista. Judy also introduced everyone to Xochitl Garcia, a recent graduate of the Latin American School of Medicine in Cuba.

The gathering also took time in the program to recognize the great contributions of two fighters for Cuba that have passed, the founder of Pastors for Peace, Rev. Lucius Walker Jr. and a leader in the Cuba solidarity and social justice movement in Seattle, Tom Warner.

The event then received greetings from Pastors for Peace organizer Manolo de los Santos who called from Boston to wish participants a successful border crossing. The program closed with the beautiful music of Maria Luisa Melendez, who inspired the crowd as they picked up signs, banners and flags and began the march to challenge the U.S. blockade on Cuba that would end in victory.

This victory at the Canada/U.S. border is the first test for this year's Pastors for Peace Caravan. We ask that all of our supporters and co-fighters stay on alert for the U.S./Mexico border crossing on Thursday, July 16, where the caravan could face another

challenge on their route to make sure the humanitarian aid reaches Cuba!

This year's border crossing was co-organized by Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) and the Seattle/Cuba Friendship Committee and endorsed by ANSWER Seattle, US Women & Cuba Collaboration, Free the Cuban 5 Committee – Vancouver and the National Committee to Free the Cuban Five (Seattle).

ICAP President:



Cuba will always be ready to help sister-nations



Kenia Serrano, president of the Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) and a member of Cuba's National Assembly, attended the recent national consultation of the Australia-Cuba Friendship Society. Green Left Weekly's Denis Rogatyuk spoke with her about recent developments of the Cuban Revolution.

Cuba has just been removed from the list of state-sponsors of terrorism. How do you think this will affect Cuba's relations with the United States?

First of all, there is no reason to have Cuba on such a list. We should have never been there. However, the US decided to do this back in 1992. On May 29, the removal was approved.

We consider this a very positive step in eliminating the different obstacles to forging stable bilateral relations with the US.

And of course, it is a victory for Cuba and it is a victory for international solidarity, because the world knows that Cuba is not a terrorist state. The world knows that Cuba has been a victim of state terrorism exercised by the US against Cuba, with more than 5000 Cuban victims as a result.

Even today, there are real terrorists who still freely walk on the US's streets.

The Cuban Five were five Cuban patriots jailed in the US in 1998 for infiltrating and collecting information on terrorist groups in Florida in order to stop attacks on Cuba. Now that the Cuban Five are free and back in their home country, what sort of role are they planning on playing?

Well, first of all, the Cuban Five are happy to be back with their families and the Cuban people. They are very active in the

everyday activities of Cuban life.

One of them, Fernando Gonzalez, is the deputy president of ICAP. He is in charge of relations with the solidarity movements from North America and Latin America.

It means that Fernando is now meeting with groups and individuals from a number of countries in the region — from the US, Canada, Puerto Rico among others. And the other members are quite active as well.

They themselves have said that they wish to do something new in order to really deserve their label as "Five Heroes". They say they understand that what they have done is a very important contribution to the Cuban Revolution, but they do not wish to live the remainder of their lives simply being "The Cuban Five".

I believe they are expressing a true character of revolutionaries and I think they are well prepared for exercising many responsibilities and tasks.

I remember the day when Fidel Castro received them and they spent over five hours together. Fidel asked them, at the end of the meeting, to use the high moral authority that they have to do great things for the world.

Now that the five have returned, we feel that the international solidarity movement itself has been strengthened five times. We wish to use this strength to continue

fighting against the economic blockade, for the liberation of the political prisoners in the imperialist countries, and of course, for the defence of Cuban sovereignty and the right of Cuba to freely choose its own economic and political system.

With regards to the current negotiations between Cuba and the US, what do you think are some of the concrete things that have been achieved so far?

I would like to highlight the most important factor of these negotiations — the current US administration is seated at the table with the representatives of revolutionary Cuba.

The announcements of December 17, and conversations and meetings between Obama and Raul Castro at the Summit of the Americas are quite significant. Until now, no other US administration has had the capacity to recognise Cuba as an equal partner.

Many previous US leaders have stated that if a Castro was still leader of Cuba, they would not recognise the political system or government. Now, however, Cuba and the US are communicating in a civilised manner. We have had the chance to demonstrate to them the reality of Cuba and why they should respect our country.

The most important development has been building the conditions for new relations between Cuba and the US. The major point regarding this is the opening

of embassies.

We believe this needs to take place despite the continuation of the US blockade [in place since 1960], despite the US's continuous occupation of Guantanamo Bay, despite constant US accusations of Cuba breaching human rights.

How do you see the role of ICAP with these new developments?

ICAP still has the same responsibilities when it was founded — almost 55 years ago. Since the very start of the Cuban

US funding of NGOs and counter-revolutionary groups to undermine and spread false information about the Cuban revolution.

How significant do you consider this danger to be?

The US government has adopted a more positive rhetoric towards Cuba, but they have also changed the old methods of undermining the Cuban government for new ones.

This type of non-conventional warfare

One of the best known campaigns around the world is “Yo si puede” (“Yes We Can”). This campaign provides literacy skills to the poor in nations around the world, including Indigenous communities in Australia. Do you think it will be expanded even further with the end of the blockade?

Unfortunately, illiteracy is still a phenomenon that affects the world's poor. Wherever illiteracy exists, Cuba will always offer its method to solve that problem.

What is also evident is the absence of political will by some governments to accept that Cuba is not looking for any ideological or political influence in their society. We believe in it that literacy is a basic human right — one that needs to be preserved.

It helps to empower the whole population and change the fundamental relations between a person and society as a whole. Cuba is ready to share its experience with as many countries as possible. So far, 27 countries have taken part in this program.

Could you tell us about the medical missions that Cuba has conducted more recently in Nepal and West Africa?

Cuba answered the call of those countries, and the World Health Organisation, pledging to commit our highly qualified doctors and nurses to help those nations.

It was a great challenge, particularly with regards to Ebola. We asked our doctors to recognise the risk of death in the process of facing the disease. They were ready to do that.

In fact, when one of our doctors contracted the disease, thousands of others volunteered to take his place and travel to West Africa. Upon his return for treatment in Cuba, that same doctor also asked the Ministry of Health to allow him to return to his post once he was cured. That is most inspiring.

We learned many lessons from that — most importantly, the value of internationalism and the commitment to save lives, sometimes even at the risk of your own.

All the Cuban people are educated in these values. We will always be ready to help our sister nations from across the world to fight against diseases like Ebola.

Reprinted from: www.greenleft.org.au



The return of the Cuban 5 heroes to Cuba. From L to R: Gerardo Hernandez, Fernando Gonzalez, Antonio Guerrero, Rene Gonzalez, Ramon Labanino.

Revolution, we have been receiving people from all over the world.

In fact, last year we received delegations and brigades from 82 countries. Now there is also a rise in the number of US citizens coming to visit Cuba — not only through ICAP, but also through other institutions.

Cuba is updating its economic model, but every institution like ICAP should also be undergoing a similar process. In that aspect, we are looking for more efficiency for everything that we do — particularly in terms of new communication technology.

Since December 17 and the release of the five, we have been reorienting our priorities to focus on ending the economic blockade and continuing the battle of ideas to inform our population about all the aspects of the changes.

One of the biggest existing dangers to Cuba and the Cuban Revolution is the

is also being partially assisted by their negotiation tactics. Obama has also given priority to lessening the blockade around the telecommunications sector — an area where the US will be able to receive economic benefits and be able to influence Cuban society.

We know that is a powerful weapon in their hands. But we are also prepared to deal with that. Our people are highly literate and greatly adaptable to new technologies.

This kind of warfare is not like the Bay of Pigs or the other invasions from the past. This is a different type of ideological attack and ideological warfare.

In the end, we believe that any type of regime change programs should stop in order to truly enter a new epoch of Cuba-US relations and for the US to recognise it has entered into a new era of relationship with Latin America as a whole.

Same-sex marriage isn't EQUALITY FOR ALL LGBT+ PEOPLE. OUR MOVEMENT CAN'T END

By Chelsea E. Manning

It wasn't that long ago – 4 November 2008 – that the US had an election that galvanized a generation of activists to change policies in this country that would have enshrined into law the continued marginalization of a large group of people. I'm not talking about who was elected president, or which political party took the most seats in Congress: rather, a ballot initiative in the state of California, called Proposition 8, passed by a four-point margin that night and successfully amended the state's constitution by adding language that defined marriage as being between "one man and one woman".

With 5-4 ruling in *Obergefell v Hodges*, justices determine right to marriage equality is protected under constitution in decision hailed as 'victory of love'

Now, not fully eight years later, the US supreme court ruled in favor of full marriage equality across America. And while on that night back in 2008, as I considered the long term consequences of California's newly enshrined discrimination against same-sex couples – including the possibility that the thousands of couples who married in the months prior might have effectively been "divorced" by a voting majority of their neighbors, coworkers and families – I felt faint and ran to the bathroom to throw up, today I am happy for that part of my LGBT community which has gained a well-deserved measure of equality.

But I worry that, with full marriage equality, much of the queer community will be left wondering how else to engage with a society that still wants to define who we are – and who in our community will be left to push for full equality for all transgender and queer people, now that this one fight has been won. I fear that our precious movements for social justice and all the remarkable advancements we have made are now vulnerable to being taken over by monied people and institutions, and that those of us for whom same-sex marriage rights brings no equality will be slowly erased from our movement and our history.

The unexpected shock of a marriage equality loss in California in 2008 – a state that I, like many others, ignorantly deemed "too liberal" to actually pass such a measure – brought millions of people together to focus on marriage equality – crystallizing a previously

fractured LGBT rights movement that had seemed to have lost its way politically. The purpose of the movement was to educate and promote the equality of all people.

Transgender folks have been part of the push for LGBT equality from the beginning, and we've spoken with loud and intelligent voices, and have found political and personal success and advancement all over the world. We fought police discrimination during the riots of Compton Cafeteria in San Francisco in 1966, the Stonewall Inn in 1969 and the White Night in San Francisco in 1979. We have been inspired by leaders from Sylvia Rivera and Miss Major, and from Janet Mock to Laverne Cox. We have created political organizations for ourselves, like the Street Transvestites Action Revolutionaries (Star) to Sylvia Rivera Law Project and Black & Pink.

But despite our successes and our participation in the struggle for LGBT equality, there are still queer and trans folks who struggle every single day for the right to define themselves, to access gender-appropriate healthcare and to live without harassment by other people, the police or the government. Many queer and trans people live – and lived – in our prison and jails, in our homeless shelters, in run-down houses and apartment buildings, and on the corners of every major city. Marriage equality doesn't help them; and the potential loss of momentum for trans/queer rights after this win could well hurt them.

I had the extraordinary honor to come out a trans woman on 22 August 2013, the day after a military judge sentenced me to 35 years in prison. Though not present myself, my attorney at the time, David Coombs – without giving the Today show staff any notice until several minutes beforehand – read a statement from me in which I asked that they announce to the world that I am a trans woman, refer to me with female pronouns and use my name, Chelsea. I also announced my intent to seek gender-confirming healthcare treatment while in prison.

For me, this was an incredibly empowering moment: nobody can control or define our

identities unless we let them, and so I chose to come out and to define myself – nothing more. In the two years since, I am always awestruck and inspired by the queer and trans kids out there all over the world who reach out to me and send letters from very real places like Noblesville, Indiana, Arklow, Ireland and Abeokuta, Nigeria.

Politicians begin to weigh in on the supreme court's ruling in *Obergefell v Hodges*, with Republicans notably expressing far more divisive opinions

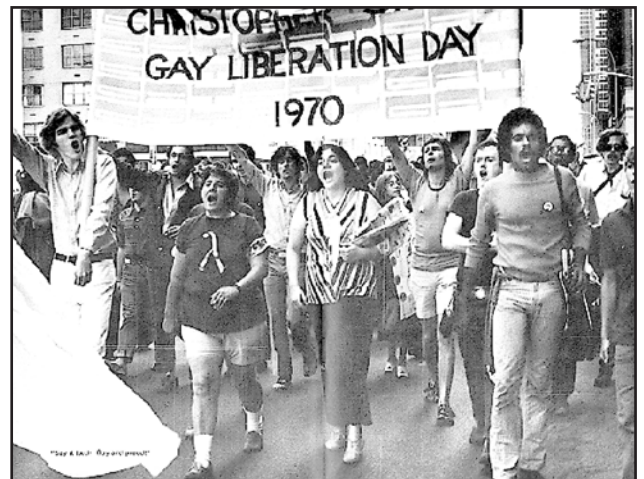
We do have to, as a movement, give hope to these kids, and especially young trans youth like Leelah Alcorn, who committed suicide last year after leaving a devastating indictment of the world that she experienced, or Islan Nettles, who was murdered on the streets of New York in 2013. It's hope that my younger self, who, like many trans/queer kids, struggled to survive while living homeless in Chicago in 2006, could've used.

We need to send a powerful message to the world in a unified voice: that we can fight for social justice for everyone, everywhere and change the world, not just get married. We can continue to build our communities and address the root causes of queer and trans poverty and deaths. We can work to get queer and trans people out of the prisons and jails and off the streets, and to improve our access to housing, education, employment and gender-confirming healthcare.

As Harvey Milk – the first openly gay politician in America who was assassinated in 1978 – said after getting letters from kid: "We gotta give 'em hope." We can do all of these things, but only if today is just the first of many victories for LGBT rights. My name is Chelsea Manning, I am trans woman and I am here to recruit you to the next stage in the equality movement. Join me.

This article was published by the Guardian Newspaper on June 26, 2015

Christopher Street Liberation Day commemorating the one-year anniversary of the Stonewall Riots.





AYOTZINAPA IS THE MICROCOSM OF WORLD STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM & JUSTICE

*By Janine Solanki
& Azza Rojbi*

This interview was conducted by Fire This Time on March 26, 2015, just after a rally for Ayotzinapa in Vancouver, Canada.

Fire This Time: On behalf of Fire This Time Newspaper, thank you all very much for agreeing to do this interview today as the Ayotzinapa Collective of Vancouver, the women organizers of the Collective. The collective has done a very good job and there has been a very good campaign for Ayotzinapa fundraising. So could each of you explain what you would like individually about the fundraising campaign?

Montse: So far what we have achieved in the past couple of months with the different events that we have done, I think it is really good. The expectations that I had were, I guess, slightly lower. We have been able to surpass what we were initially aiming in each one of these events. We have of course had a lot of support from the Latin American community. It is not only our work. Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC) has helped us a lot, and for that we are really grateful, along with committees, different organizations here in Vancouver from El Salvador and Guatemala and Venezuela and Chile, Nicaragua as well.

Macarena: We are a movement, we are a Latin American movement, working all together. Because if someone is trying to damage one of us, they are trying to damage all Latin America. Ayotzinapa's ideals represent, especially these 43 students, represent the ideals of millions in Latin America. This is not just about the disappeared, this is about the situation in Latin America. Latin American people for many years, over a long period of time, suffered because of imperialism and capitalism's influence on our continent, but no more, no more.

Manelik : There is also something important about the fundraising, it coming for a special project that is to get a community radio in Ayotzinapa and it will help the people to get more organized and to be used to communicate to all the people and to avoid forced disappearance.

FTT: So the next question, you have answered already in part. My question was: What is your opinion about the response of the Mexican and Latin American communities to this fundraising campaign? But, you have already answered that. The other part of the questions is: What do you think has been the response of youth and especially college and university students?

Macarena: When you explain the situation they say "oh, this has happened?" because in

the mass media you cannot find information about Ayotzinapa. But, also if you explain the situation, I think that young people are not paying a lot of attention to this, they say, "oh, it's very sad situation...what has happened in Mexico?" But, when you say you need to do something more, they are not able to. So I think that in this case, people are not responding very well in terms of social conscious, in terms of working for something you believe in. I don't know if it is just because they have a normal happy life, and they are not worried about other people, or just because they think that the reality in Mexico is completely far from this. But also you can see this in Mexican or Latin American students, so it's not just Canadian ones. I don't know if it because university sometimes is just like the rest of the status quo, that they just think of science or humanities in terms of academic stuff and are not very worried about social movements or social issues.

Montse: I have a variety of approaches to this, because we really have not seen a lot of response from youth and students, that is for sure. Most of the people that attend the rallies and the fundraisers, events, talks and the presentations are usually older people. I don't exactly know what is the factor that affects this the most. When we think what might be influencing this, it might be the location of the universities. The two big universities here in Vancouver are far away from the venues where we



Reprinted from Telesur

have been holding the events, so that might be playing a role in the attendance of students at these events. I really don't think this is the only issue, as Maca was saying, there's a lot of apathy, there's a lack of social awareness here in Vancouver. I have tried talking to people about this issue and some people are really receptive but that doesn't go beyond receiving the information. They receive the information, they're like "oh, that's really terrible," and that's it. They are not willing to move a muscle beyond the point of saying "that is really bad." I have even come across people who are like "oh, that's really bad, but you know it's not a local issue, I don't see why I should get involved..." Like, if it's not something that's affecting me, I don't care enough to do something about it. Which, I think is really bad.

Of course, it's always bad to generalize. We have had people who help that are young, I mean there are a lot of people in VCSC who are really young, and they are helping, so youth is present, but it's not the majority of the people who attend each one of these events.

Thinking about the distance issue, we had an event yesterday held at a university. It was a concert/fundraising event and we were happy to see a bunch of students, the majority were students. So, maybe that helps to explain why they are not coming, because the university is

kind of far and you have to go to them. It was really good to see that they were interested, that they were there at least, but I really think that there has to be a stronger push, I don't even know from who. It's really hard to talk to students in general, but it's even harder to talk to students who don't care about whatever you want to say. I don't know... It's an interesting challenge that we need to solve.

Manelik: What I can say is that what I have seen in all the events that I have been, is that there are not young people. Just compare, if I ask my friends in Mexico or Latin America that are at university, they are really doing hard work to make Ayotzinapa more visible.

Macarena: Ah yes, I understand your point, because in Chile when there is a struggle, the most important part of the people that are doing the demonstration, that are going out onto the street, is young people. But, here it is not young people, it is like this is a dead generation.

FTT: Beyond Vancouver, how far has this campaign been successful? How has the campaign been in other countries, for example the US, Europe and Internationally?

Manelik: That's a big question. What I see is that there is a lot of world support from the community in all the world. Here in Canada, it is big because there is involvement in Ottawa, Montreal, Edmonton, Vancouver, and Kelowna also gives some support. Also in Germany, Italy, India, Asia, in most parts of the world, in South America. I think that this is the flag that involves many fights from the memory of many peoples.

Macarena: I think that the campaign covered different aspects about the problem in Mexico. So, different groups have different understandings about the situation. It is very important to understand what has happened there, why this happened and try to do this together. We have some differences, but the important thing is to not forget the ideals of the Ayotzinapa students, keeping the ideals about the Ayotzinapa students, because some-

times in politics people are taking advantage of the problems, of these disappeared students. It is very important to be careful about this, because we are not joking with this, this is people, 43 students, you cannot use them for your own promotion, you cannot use them to promote your politics, this is just about people and their ideals.

FTT: How has this campaign been in Mexico? And also what have been the significant things that this campaign for Ayotzinapa has established in Mexico?

Montse: In general the Ayotzinapa campaign struck a cord in Mexican society. In 1968 there was a massacre of students which has been in the Mexican consciousness ever since and so students are this beacon of hope every single time. Whenever there is a movement and you see students involved, that makes it stronger then compared to those that don't have students in them. The fact that these 43 students were kidnapped on the way to this protest was kind of like symbolic in a way because it was 47 years after this massacre, it was just outrageous that it would happen again; that students would get attacked by the state, knowing that they were protesting for a good cause. If you add that up to the violence and the narco state that has been present in Mexico for so much time. This was kind of like the drop that overflowed the vessel, if you can say that in English. And so the protests ever since this happened were really strong, really, really, really strong and they have not died out yet, which is something kind of surprising knowing how things work in Mexico, usually protests last a month at most and then people forget. But, Ayotzinapa has not been forgotten. That brings me to the second part, how has this changed Mexico? This has awakened, not everyone in Mexico, but it has awakened a good portion of the society to make them really see that the government is not doing things right, that this is not an isolated state, that something has to be done differently, that there needs to be a change. Ayotzinapa has raised the awareness of thousands of people, and those people now are questioning the government, and not only the current government, they are questioning the type of government that we have. I think if this could become a more generalized state of things, it could bring a good change in Mexico. This is a good spark, but it needs to be used in a good way. It is still in the process, it is difficult, but it is still a hope that something could be done to make things different from the way that they are now in Mexico.

Macarena: In my opinion, the situation with the 43 students is a very bad situation in terms of that people cannot be disappeared so easily any more. But I think that Mexican society, Mexican communities, farmer communities and Indigenous communities, they are taking more power right now. Because they say that it was a state crime, we cannot allow that

these kind of things happen again. We need to be organized, we need to organize our community by ourselves, without any politician, without any governmental institution, just a grassroots movement, with autonomy, self-determination and self-organization. This is Indigenous and farmers building a new movement with self-determination, with autonomy, with self-organization, without the criminal state, all together.

FTT: Do you think that the Ayotzinapa campaign should be continued? I mean not necessarily the fundraising campaign, but to continue the political campaign and to continue to bring people together, not only to support the Ayotzinapa issue but also other issues similar to it and basically to have for the first time an ongoing campaign for atrocities happening in Mexico?

Montse: The short answer is yes, I think that this should be continued. I think this momentum should be used as a foundation for future movements. In general, the Canadian community and the Canadian people are not necessarily aware of what is going on around the world. I feel that a lot of people here live in a bubble, and as long as nothing is affecting you, you are not going to pay attention, why would you? If your trees are blossoming in front of your house why would you care about what is going on across the border, or two countries away. It is not necessarily something people think about. Yes, I think we should raise awareness. Yes, I think we should educate people, to make them step out of that bubble, because that is just not the reality. The fact that this is not affecting them, doesn't mean that they are not involved.

It is very easy to see connections. As much as we pretend, we are not living an isolated life. I was reading recently, there is another struggle that is starting right now in Mexico with the workers in the valley of San Quintin, in the South part of California, which is California [Province], Mexico. I was just reading the outrageous conditions under which they are working and all the things that they produce are organic stuff. They produce organic strawberries, they produce organic tomatoes, they are forced to work in conditions that nobody would believe still exist because they are close to slavery. We can say, that doesn't affect me, but if you go to the supermarket, where are all

those things coming from? You buy organic strawberries and you are really happy because you are not poisoning yourself, allegedly, with any of the agro-chemicals that come in regular strawberries, but you don't see how you being comfortable, in a first world country, is affecting the other people, in countries that are not yours. Even though you claim that none of this really affects you, but it really does and maybe you are part of the problem indirectly.

That is the type of awareness we need to make people come to realize, that they are not living in an isolated life, especially in this "modern" world where you can be eating stuff from

Macarena: I completely agree with Montse, but I want to add some other points to this. I think that this, in this moment is about 43, but that doesn't mean that we are not paying attention to all the problems that there are right now in Mexico. Mexico has different problems, and these problems come from capitalism, come from the different free trade agreements that Mexico has with countries like the US and Canada. In our countries, in the Latin American countries that have good relations with the US and Canada, we can look at the power of imperialism on the people, we can look at the same thing in Chile, where we have similar agreements. A good example of

this is our fight, Ayotzinapa. These students were taken by the police, by the state. The mass media didn't say anything about this. The first media that explained what was happening in Ayotzinapa was Telesur, that represents socialist ideas because telesur is from Venezuela. Venezuela is supporting Ayotzinapa because they are socialist. All Latin American countries that are supporting the same ideals understand that it is not an isolated problem. This is a problem about capitalism, imperialism and colonialism against our people. I want to say, that if there

is something that we have in common, in this moment, and we have ideas that we can say and struggle for, it is anti-capitalist ideas, anti-colonialist ideas, and anti-imperialist ideas. We should not stop the campaign about the 43, but continue fighting against these things.

Manelik: I agree with Maca and Montse too. Now it is like 6 months from the kidnapping of the 43, but what I can see is it is just the beginning, it is just the beginning of the fever, because we need to release our political prisoners, like Nestora Salgado, and so many others. We need to continue making this struggle bigger, because it is really helping to stop the violence of the state. What I think about what Maca and Montse say is that we are against capitalism, against imperialism and colonialism.

FTT: Thank you very much for taking the time and for explaining this important struggle.



"They took them alive, we want them back alive" images from #ilustradoresConAyotzinapa

thousands of miles away. You don't know what the conditions in other places are. How can you say, how dare you say, you are not involved, you are not affected, where are your computers being built? Who is making your computers? Under what conditions are those people working? It's not only Mexico, and it is not only Latin America, it's the whole world, there's a very big issue. It all comes down again to the type of system that it is being used, capitalism, consumerism and all of these things that we are involved in. We cannot say we are not connected, I mean we might not see the direct connection, and we may not know anyone in Mexico, but that does not mean that we are not contributing to some extent, or being part of the problem. If we are part of the problem, why not try to be part of the solution as well. So, yes, I think this is a very good excuse for us to raise awareness in Canada and everywhere in the world, to make sure people know that we are all connected. As Indigenous people here say, we are all one, and we cannot just turn a blind eye on issues that are not happening in our backyard, only because they are not happening in our backyard.

¡Venceremos!

OUR STRUGGLE

3.1 Million Venezuelans Cast Votes in Primaries for United Socialist Party of Venezuela

29 June, 2015 (teleSUR English)

Ahead of national legislative elections that will be held Dec. 6, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) held its primary election Sunday, with over 3.1 million casting their vote to select the party's candidates.

The president of Venezuela's National Assembly, Diosdado Cabello, reported the turnout, with other officials and socialist supporters going to social media to post pictures of the long queues at polling stations.

The right-wing opposition coalition, known as MUD, also held its primaries in May, but registered a lower turnout with 543,000 voters.

From the 1,162 candidates registered for these primary elections, 98 were chosen to run as candidates on behalf of the PSUV, the largest political party in Latin America with over 7 million members.

The primaries were staged in 87 districts across the country with gender and age quotas to facilitate female and younger candidates.

During his speech on Sunday, Cabello added that around 30 percent of the elected PSUV candidates were women.

The PSUV has gone to great lengths to promote inclusiveness in these primary elections, especially among women and youth, with only 15 percent of candidates above the age of 50 and more than half being women. In contrast, more than 80 percent of the candidates for the right-wing MUD were above the age of 50.

The PSUV must win at least two thirds of the National Assembly — some 111 seats — to maintain the absolute majority required to approve laws, among other legal instruments.



We Will Win!

AROUND THE WORLD

Cuba Has Officially Eradicated HIV Transmission to Babies: WHO

June 30, 2015 (TeleSUR English)

The World Health Organization says Cuba has just scored a huge victory in the global battle against HIV and syphilis. Cuba became the first country in the world Tuesday to be recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) for eliminating mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis.

"This is a major victory in our long fight against HIV and sexually transmitted infections, and an important step towards having an AIDS-free generation" said Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General.

According to the WHO, Cuba's mother-to-child transmission rate of HIV is now below 2 percent of births, while syphilis transmission is less than 0.5 percent. Just two babies were born with HIV in Cuba in 2013, while 5 were born with syphilis, according to figures verified by the WHO and the Pan American Health Organization.

Michel Sidibe, Executive Director of the United Nations program UNAIDS, described Cuba's achievement as "a celebration for children and families everywhere."

"It shows that ending the AIDS epidemic is possible and we expect Cuba to be the first of many countries coming forward to seek validation that they have ended their epidemics among children," Sidibe said.

The WHO first announced they believed Cuba would be eligible for recognition in March, but until now has withheld confirmation while it conducted an in-depth review of the country's health data.

Worldwide, close to 1.4 million women with HIV become pregnant every year. Without specialized treatment, there is a 15-45 percent chance a HIV positive mother will pass the disease to their baby, either before birth or during breast feeding. Comparably, around 1 million women with syphilis become pregnant, according to the WHO.

In a statement, the WHO said Cuba's milestone in combating these two diseases was achieved through guaranteed comprehensive prenatal care for mothers, including testing for HIV and syphilis.

"These services are provided as part of an equitable, accessible and universal health system in which maternal and child health programs are integrated with programs for HIV and sexually transmitted infections," the statement read.

The milestone shows that the fight against some of the world's worst diseases is winnable, according to Pan American Health Organization director Carissa Etienne. "Cuba's success demonstrates that universal access and universal health coverage are feasible and indeed are the key to success, even against challenges as daunting as HIV," Etienne said.

Illiteracy Rate Drops to Historic Lows in Bolivia

June 17, 2015 (TeleSUR English)

Bolivia recorded this week that its illiteracy level has fallen to 3.12 percent of the population, the lowest the country has ever seen, Education Minister Roberto Aguilar announced Monday, adding that it is a major achievement for the country whose illiteracy rate was closer to 13 percent less than 10 years ago.

"In 2005 we started with an illiteracy rate

of nearly 13 percent," said Aguilar. "This year the illiteracy rate is 3.12 percent. Out of 100 people, three are illiterate, and of these three, two are over 65."

However, the education minister regretted that illiteracy rates are highest among women, with three out of every four illiterate persons being female.

Aguilar attributed Bolivia's educational success to the social policies of President Evo

Morales — who has been in power since 2006 — and his creation of a Plurinational State, which granted more power to the various cultures and ethnicities within the country.

Bolivia was declared officially illiteracy free in 2008 when it recorded that only 3.8 percent of its population was unable to read or write. Since 2008, that number has been getting progressively lower. According to UNESCO, the cultural branch of the United Nations, countries are deemed free of illiteracy when the rate is less than four percent.

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*Javad Zarif, Iranian Foreign Minister
and John Kerry, U.S. Secretary of State*

THEATRICALS IN THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS

*By Manuel Yepe**

“Considering the years of propaganda surrounding Iran and its nuclear program, it was clear to any informed observer that the recent US-Iran nuclear deal was nothing more than theatre. Such is the conclusion reached by US writer Brandon Turbeville in his analysis published in “The Activist Post” website.

The US/NATO imperialist machine has made its desire to wage war on the Persian nation explicit for some time. The only question is just how long this theatre will last before that goal is finally realized.

Turbeville says that “while the Western press and corporate media outlets have taken to presenting the deal as either a tragic capitulation to the deadly warmongering Iranians or a brilliant lunge for Western peace, the premise of their presentations are exactly the same –that Iran is dangerous, wants war, and is doing whatever it can to acquire a nuclear weapon.”

Turbeville wrote that US and Israeli intelligence have both determined that Iran does not have a nuclear weapon nor is it attempting to acquire one, nor is it carrying out aggressive preparations in the region. Iran’s military capabilities are largely defensive, not offensive. The agreement signed with the West was an extraordinary act of conciliation and cooperation. Iran bent over backwards to appease the West in its imperialists aims.

“I have argued from the very beginning of the US-Iran nuclear talks that the diplomacy taking place was nothing more than theatre to be used later in the rush to war as evidence that the US did “everything in its power” to avoid confrontation. While the future is impossible to predict, one might reasonably believe that the US will soon sabotage the nuclear deal,” says Turbeville.

There is the distinct likelihood that the US will soon attempt to implement some egregious demands and conditions that the Iranians will be unable to accept, thus ending the nuclear talks. Or the US will claim that the Iranians are in violation of some minuscule and vague rule, causing them to be in violation of the deal and subsequently causing the deal to fall apart. Any violation or disruption of the nuclear deal will then be used by the US, NATO, and Israel to justify military action against Iran.

Turbeville warns that symptoms of this can already be seen at NATO quarters through the declarations of French Foreign Minister, Laurent Fabius, who said, “France will not accept a deal if it is not clear that inspections can be done at all Iranian installations, including military sites.”

The Western or Western/Israeli plan against Iran, along with the theatre of alleged Washington-Tel Aviv tensions has been used before.

In 2009, the Brookings Institution, an academic center that caters to major banking, corporate, and military-industrial firms, released a report entitled “Which Path to Persia? Options for a New American Strategy for Iran”, in which the authors mapped out a plan which leaves no doubt as to the ultimate desire from the US financial, corporate, and governing classes.

The plan described a number of ways the Western oligarchy would be able to destroy Iran, including a number of methods that might possibly be implemented before direct military invasion and open occupation. The plan included attempting to foment destabilization inside Iran via the color revolution apparatus, violent unrest, proxy terrorism, and “limited airstrikes” conducted by the US, Israel or both.

Interestingly enough, the report states that any action taken against Iran must be done after the idea that Iran has rejected a fair and generous offer by the West has been disseminated throughout the general public. The report read: “...any military operation against Iran will likely be very unpopular around the world and so will require the

proper international context. The best way to minimize international opprobrium and maximize support is to strike only when there is a widespread conviction that the Iranians were given but then rejected a superb offer. Under those circumstances, the United States (or Israel) could portray its military operations as taken in sorrow, not anger, and at least some in the international community would conclude that the Iranians “brought it on themselves” by refusing a very good deal.”

The tentative agreement between the US and Iran regarding the latter’s nuclear program, with Israel wailing in the background, can easily be seen as a ploy of the plan described by the Brookings Institution.

The Israelis are not dissatisfied with the United States nor is the United States dissatisfied with Israel. Both parties are merely playing a role in a carefully scripted drama that ultimately involves more war against the enemies of Anglo-American imperialism and the world oligarchy.

“While the Iranians are busy negotiating, the Americans and the Israelis are busy gearing up for war,” concludes Brandon Turbeville.

**Manuel E. Yepe, is a lawyer, economist and journalist. He is a professor at the Higher Institute of International Relations in Havana. He was Cuba’s ambassador to Romania, general director of the Prensa Latina agency; vice president of the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television; founder and national director of the Technological Information System (TIPS) of the United Nations Program for Development in Cuba, and secretary of the Cuban Movement for the Peace and Sovereignty of the Peoples.*



TEATRALIDAD EN LA CRISIS EN EL MEDIO ORIENTE

*** EN ESPAÑOL ***

*Por Manuel Yepe**

“Si se tienen en cuenta los años de existencia de la campaña de propaganda que rodea a Irán y su programa nuclear, es evidente para cualquier observador informado que el reciente acuerdo nuclear Estados Unidos-Irán no es más que teatro”. Tal es la conclusión a que llega un análisis del escritor estadounidense Brandon Turbeville publicado en el sitio “Activist Post”.

La maquinaria imperialista EEUU-OTAN ha realizado su deseo de hacer explícita su decisión -tomada desde hace algún tiempo- de librar una guerra contra la nación persa. Queda por precisar cuánto durará este teatro antes de que finalmente se proceda al objetivo.

Turbeville sostiene que “mientras la prensa occidental y corporativa presenta el acuerdo como “una trágica capitulación del belicismo mortal de los iraníes” o “una brillante estocada por la paz de Occidente”, la premisa de su enfoque es que Irán es peligroso, quiere guerra y hace todo lo posible por adquirir el arma nuclear.

Estados Unidos y la Inteligencia israelí conocen que Irán no tiene armas nucleares, no intenta adquirirlas, ni realiza preparativos agresivos en la región. Sus capacidades militares son básicamente defensivas, no ofensivas. El acuerdo firmado con Occidente es un extraordinario acto de conciliación y cooperación; Irán ha pretendido apaciguar a Occidente para aplacar sus objetivos imperialistas, opina el escritor estadounidense.

“He defendido desde el inicio de las conversaciones nucleares entre Estados Unidos e Irán que no eran más que gestos teatrales para ser utilizados más adelante como prueba de que Washington hizo todo lo posible para evitar la confrontación... Aunque presagiar el futuro es imposible, puede creerse razonablemente que Estados Unidos pronto saboteará el acuerdo nuclear”, asegura el escritor.

Lo más probable es

que Estados Unidos formulará algunas desmedidas demandas que los iraníes serán incapaces de aceptar para así poner fin a las conversaciones nucleares... O que Estados Unidos acusará a los iraníes de violar alguna regla insignificante y vaga que conduzca a la ruptura del acuerdo nuclear, lo que se utilizará por los Estados Unidos, la OTAN e Israel para justificar una acción militar.

Turbeville advierte que ya se empiezan a observar síntomas de ello en la OTAN por las declaraciones del Canciller francés Laurent Fabius quien señaló que, “Francia no aceptará un acuerdo si no queda claro que se pueden hacer inspecciones de instalaciones en todo Irán, incluyendo instalaciones militares”.

El plan occidental o israelo-occidental contra Irán, en un teatro de supuestas tensiones entre Tel Aviv y Washington se ha manejado anteriormente.

En 2009, Brookings Institution, centro académico de estudios que nutre a intereses bancarios, corporativos y militar-industriales, publicó un informe titulado “¿Qué camino a Persia? Opciones para una nueva estrategia estadounidense para Irán” que recomienda un plan que no deja dudas acerca de los fines que persiguen las clases financieras, corporativas y gubernamentales estadounidenses.

El plan describe maneras y vías por las que la oligarquía occidental podría destruir a Irán, incluyendo una serie de métodos a implementar antes de la invasión militar directa y la ocupación abierta. El plan incluye la desestabilización dentro de Irán mediante el aparato de revolución de color, violentos disturbios, terrorismo y ataques aéreos limitados, llevados a cabo por Estados Unidos, Israel o

ambos. Curiosamente, el informe señalaba que cualquier acción contra Irán debe hacerse después de haber sembrado la idea de que Irán ha rechazado una justa y generosa oferta por parte de Occidente.

El informe decía: “...cualquier operación militar contra Irán será muy impopular en el mundo y se requiere de un adecuado contexto internacional ... La mejor condición para minimizar el rechazo y maximizar el apoyo internacional es atacar sólo cuando exista una convicción generalizada de que los iraníes aceptaron pero luego rechazaron una oferta magnífica. Bajo esas circunstancias, Estados Unidos (o Israel) podría presentar sus operaciones militares como algo lamentable, sin iracundia, y al menos algunos en la comunidad mundial concluirían que los iraníes “se la buscaron” al negarse a una muy buena negociación.

El acuerdo provisional entre los Estados Unidos e Irán sobre el programa nuclear de este último, con Israel lamentándolo, puede verse como una reproducción del plan descrito por Brookings.

Los israelíes no están satisfechos con los estadounidenses ni Estados Unidos satisfecho con Israel. Ambas partes están jugando sus respectivos papeles en una obra cuidadosamente preparada que implica, en última instancia, más guerra contra los enemigos del imperialismo angloamericano y la oligarquía mundial.

“Mientras los iraníes negocian, norteamericanos e israelíes se ocupan de preparar el engranaje para la guerra, concluye Brandon Turbeville.

**Manuel E. Yepe Menendez es periodista y se desempeña como Profesor adjunto en el Instituto Superior de las Relaciones Internacionales de La Habana.*



oppressed countries is the only solution which has the possibility to create a world which is peaceful and just for all.

Unfortunately, these wars are not going to end just because we wish them to. It is essential that we educate ourselves and others about the truth behind these wars. We must then organize and mobilize against them, as we have done in forums like this, in rallies and pickets. It seems sometimes like we're fighting a very uphill battle, maybe even sometimes it feels like a hopeless battle. As much as we struggle for a better world, nearly every day there is a new attack, a new war on another country. But we have to remember that mass mobilization and resistance, both in the U.S. and in Vietnam, were what ended the Vietnam War. The massive protest movement in the U.S. as well as the heroic resistance of the Vietnamese people succeeded in ending a terrible and criminal U.S. war. People in the Middle East are resisting against the wars and occupations in their countries, and it is essential that we here support them. If we want to win, and bring peace to the world, we must unite with people all around the world to end this brutal new era of war and occupation. Thank you.



By Noah Fine

As the summer arrives in Canada, many of the tragedies and suffering caused by war and occupation around the world seem further away than ever. As thousands of families in Canada pack tents and other necessities to enjoy the peaceful wilderness of this country, millions of Syrians who have had to flee from their homes, now live in the desperate conditions of refugee camps due to the imperialist forged civil war in their country. As many in Canada begin to enjoy some of Canada's incredible tourist attractions, the Saudi/US bombing and war on Yemen has continued to level cities to the ground bringing with it the destruction of thousands of years of history, civilization and human life.

MAWO Actions Continue into Summer Opposing Imperialist War & Occupation!

With this in mind, Vancouver anti-war coalition, Mobilization Against War & Occupation (MAWO) has on its agenda to maintain consistency in the fight against war. June was another busy month of MAWO's program of activities and actions to educate, organize and mobilize against imperialist war and occupation.

On June 9th 2015, peace activists and supporters gathered in East Vancouver's Joe's Café for MAWO's monthly public forum and multimedia event. This month's featuring guest speaker, Nita Palmer, author of the book "War & Occupation in Afghanistan: Which Way Forward?" (Battle of Ideas Press, 2010). The title of the forum, "From Afghanistan to Yemen: More Than One Decade of War, Occupation and Bloodshed - Where Are We Today?" gave participants an opportunity to look back to over a decade of continuous war and occupation. "Since Afghanistan was invaded and occupied in October 2001, we have seen 14 years of one country after another devastated by U.S. led wars, occupations, sanctions, covert and overt military operations." Stated Nita during her talk. A lively discussion took place afterwards where participants discussed the future of imperialist war and occupation and the necessity to build an antiwar movement to oppose it.

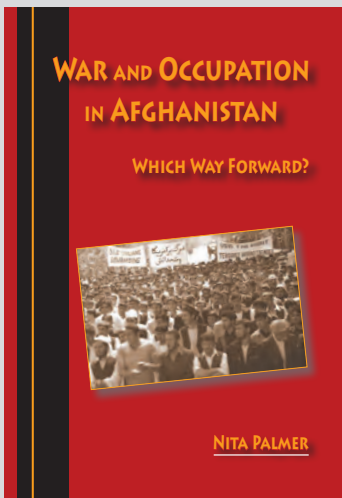
The public forum also gave a great educational base for MAWO to move on to its next activity that month. On June 19th, 2015 MAWO held its' monthly anti-war petition drive and rally in downtown Vancouver. Joined by members of the Iraqi, Syrian and Yemeni communities, activists spread out in the busy area of downtown to encourage people walking by to sign petitions against war. The group collected hundreds of signatures while engaging thousands on the busy Friday in discussion, handing out fliers or just seeing the visual antiwar display set up by MAWO. A short program of speakers also gave talks during the activity of which included Iraqi activist Mamdoh Ashir, Yemeni activist Asaad Al-Jaboubi and Tunisian activist as well as MAWO executive committee member, Azza Rojbi.

Besides organizing their own activities, MAWO also participates in a number of other groups events and city-wide festivals. Every year MAWO sets up a table at the popular "Car Free Day" festival on Commercial Drive in East Vancouver. The festival brings tens of thousands to enjoy this community event. The MAWO table received hundreds of visits and distributed hundreds of fliers and information against war while collecting petition signatures and engaging in many great antiwar discussions.

As the crisis of war and occupation grows around the world, MAWO has committed to continue organizing in protest and encouraging new people to get involved in the struggle to end suffering, war and occupation.

Battle of Ideas Press

WAR AND OCCUPATION IN AFGHANISTAN WHICH WAY FORWARD?



"The problem of Afghanistan boils down to just two words: foreign occupation. The Canada/US/ NATO occupation forces claim that corruption, poverty, drug production, the presence of the Taliban and other social or political crises are the fundamental problems of Afghanistan which they must fix. The irony of this claim is that the same occupation forces have proven themselves completely incapable of fixing these problems or of bettering the lives of Afghan people one bit after eight years of occupation. Under the watchful eye of the occupation forces, corruption has become rampant in Afghanistan, from the local level all the way up to the highest levels of government. Afghanistan has gone from producing less than 10% of the world's opium in 2001 to producing a staggering 93% of the world's opium in 2008, according to the UN World Health Organization."

BY NITA PALMER

Nita Palmer is an author and researcher on the war in Afghanistan. She is a member of the editorial board of Vancouver, Canada-based social justice newspaper Fire This Time.

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Seattle welcomes the 26th Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba



By Azza Rojbi

On Monday June 29, the Seattle-Cuba Friendship Committee held a send-off event for the 26th annual Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba. Supporters of Cuba from the U.S. and Canada gathered together in the El Centro de la Raza for an evening of politics, culture and delicious food.

The evening opened with a heartfelt Latin musical performance by the duo Laura Oviedo & Marc Smason.

Hap Bockelie, MC of the night and organizer with the Seattle-Cuba Friendship Committee read a letter from Sol Bockelie, a student from Seattle at the Latin American School of Medicine in Cuba. Sol shared his experience as a U.S. citizen studying medicine for free in Cuba and spoke of the warmth and hospitality of the Cuban people.

Next was guest speaker Bill Hackwell. Bill is a known social documentary photographer, long-time Cuba solidarity activist and an organizer with the International Committee for the Freedom of the Cuban Five in the U.S. He spoke about the importance of the Victory of the release of the 5 Cuban Heroes and the necessity to keep the pressure on the U.S. government to lift the blockade on Cuba.

Seattle based poet Jose Carrillo and Jorge shared with the participants a

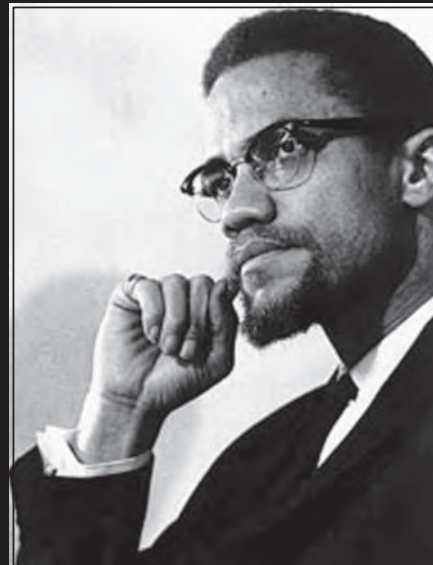
strong and powerful poem about the missing 43 students of Ayotzinapa and the struggle of youth in Mexico against the corruption and suppression of the Mexican government.

Dr. Xochitl Garcia, a recent graduate of the Latin American School of Medicine in Cuba shared her experience as a doctor trained in Cuba where she learned the importance of putting people before profit. Dr. Xochitl emphasized her dedication to work with immigrants and refugees community in need of access to healthcare across the U.S.

Jim Page, social justice activist and folk singer-songwriter performed beautiful and powerful songs on his acoustic guitar. He was followed by a talk from Tamara Hansen, coordinator of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba (VCSC). Tamara spoke about the importance of the Pastors for Peace Caravan to Cuba and shared with participants a report from the successful 2015 Canada/U.S. Border crossing.

The evening wrapped up with another musical performance by Laura Oviedo & Marc Smason. The Caravanistas said goodbye to the crowd of supporters before getting into the yellow school bus on their tour of the United States to challenge the immoral and criminal US blockade on Cuba!

“By Any Means Necessary...”



MALCOLM X SPEAKS

The question that is asked, where will all of this end? I repeat, America is faced with her worst domestic crisis since the Civil War. The worst crisis since the Revolutionary War. For America now faces a race war. The entire country is on the verge of erupting into racial violence and bloodshed simply because 20 million ex-slaves here in America are demanding freedom, justice, and equality from their former slavemasters.

Twenty million so-called Negroes, second-class citizens, seeking nothing but human dignity and human rights, the right to live in dignity as a human being. And rather than give genuine sincere respect to your cry for human rights, the American white man answers your nonviolence with violence. He answers your prayers and freedom songs with false promises, deceitful maneuvers, and outright bloodshed.

According to what we were taught from the white man's textbooks in school, the Revolutionary War and the Civil War were two wars fought on American soil supposedly for freedom and democracy. But if these two wars were really fought for freedom and human dignity of all men, why are 20 million of our people still confined and enslaved here in America by second-class citizenship? The truth is that the Revolutionary War was fought on American soil to free the American white man from the English white man. The Revolutionary War was never fought to provide freedom and a democracy in this white country for the Black man. Our people remained slaves here in America even after the Declaration of Independence was signed. In fact most of the white Founding Fathers who signed the Declaration of Independence were slave owners themselves.

An excerpt from an interview with Malcolm X at the University of California, Berkeley on Oct. 11, 1963.

Vancouver rallies to mark 9 months of protest for the 43 disappeared Ayotzinapa Students



By Tamara Hansen

On Friday June 26, 2015 Vancouver activists gathered at the Vancouver Art Gallery to once again demand justice for the 43 missing Mexican students from Ayotzinapa. June 2015 marks 9 months since their disappearance on September 26, 2014. Organized by the Vancouver Solidarity with Ayotzinapa Collective, the program included greetings from Thomas Davies of Fire This Time, Victor Pardo of URNG-MAIZ (Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca) and Alison Bodine

of Vancouver Communities in Solidarity with Cuba. A powerful letter was read from the Honourable Students Executive Committee "Ricardo Flores Magon" of the Rural Teachers School "Raúl Isidro Burgos" in Ayotzinapa.

The letter was read in Spanish by Manelik and in English by Alison Bodine, part of the letter explained, "The 560 students who are still standing firm and strong in our combative Rural Teachers School "Raúl Isidro Burgos" of Ayotzinapa, Guerrero. We want to tell you, thank you very much. Because even though small, our light will be a form of embracing all those who are missing today and those who suffer from their absence. May this light show that we are not alone in the pain and rage that dresses the floor of the Mexico from below."

Organizers chanted, explained the case to people walking by and drew chalk art to illustrate that "We are all Ayotzinapa! Somos todos Ayotzinapa!"

"Rumbo a Cuba" Initiative

Iniciativa "Rumbo a Cuba"



RUMBO A CUBA is fundraising for a much needed tractor & freezer truck for the Julio Antonio Mella International Solidarity (CIJAM) Camp in Caimito, Cuba. CIJAM is where thousands of international guests stay while volunteering in Cuba every year! It has been a real challenge for the camp to provide the necessary services to its guests, especially because of the cruel US blockade. We invite you to join us for the following events to support our campaign!



INICIATIVA RUMBO A CUBA es un proyecto para la compra de un tractor y un camión refrigerado para el campamento de solidaridad internacional Julio Antonio Mella (CIJAM), en Caimito, Cuba. El CIJAM es donde miles de brigadistas internacionales de solidaridad con Cuba se alojan mientras hacen el trabajo voluntario en Cuba. Ha sido un verdadero desafío para el campamento proporcionar los servicios necesarios a sus brigadistas, sobre todo a causa del cruel bloqueo impuesto por los Estados Unidos. ¡Por favor, colabore y participe con nosotros para hacer el trabajo en unidad y hermandad para Cuba!

¡FIESTA CUBANA!
Saturday July 11 / 8pm
Ukrainian Cultural Center
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Drinks, delicious food
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Boletos \$10 adelantados | \$15 en la puerta
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OUR HERITAGE



Vilma Espín

Cuban Revolutionary leader, helped found the Cuban Federation of Women (FMC) and was its president up to her death in 2007.

Participation: Essence of the Revolution

When I talk about how the federation was created, I always emphasize that at the time we didn't talk about women's liberation. We didn't talk about women's emancipation, or the struggle for equality. We didn't use those terms then. What we did talk about was participation. Women wanted to participate. This included women who had taken an active part in the struggle, who had been in the mountains. They, like other women across the country, wanted to help in this new stage that was dawning, which was a genuine revolution

From the very beginning, the new laws made it clear to the mother, the housewife, the woman who had lost her children in the struggle, that this revolution was in her interests. It was in the interests of her children and her family.

Women had confidence in the revolution – because there was real proof, every day, that the revolution wasn't just hot air, it wasn't empty phrases of the kind people were used to hearing from politicians in the past. This was a genuine thing. And women wanted to be part of it, to *do* something. The more the revolutionary laws strengthened this conviction, the more women demanded a chance to contribute – and the more they saw how necessary their contribution was.

Sometimes I'm asked to give a one-word definition of the Cuban Revolution. I reply that it's about participation – the participation of the entire people in everything. Together, the population went through difficult years. For women, this had an impact right from the beginning. They began to understand the point Lenin emphasized over and over – that for a revolution to move forward, to develop, women had to participate.

Excerpt from October 1987 interview

Continued from page 15

high school or has a prison record. (2014, Young Invincibles)

Symptoms of Racism and Poverty: Prisons & Police Brutality

The U.S. has the highest rate of incarceration of any country in the world. Although the U.S. has only 5% of the world population, they have 25% of the world's prisoners, with 2.3 million people behind bars. Nearly one-half of people locked up, 1 million people, are black, meaning that black people are put in prison at a rate 6 times that of white people. Combined, black people and Latinos made up 58% of the prison population in 2008, although they only represent about 25% of the U.S. population. These are staggering numbers considering the lasting effects that imprisonment has in communities, from the break-up of family structures and support systems, to the difficulty of getting jobs after release, to problems of drug addiction and crime that are propagated through the U.S. prison system.

Recent reports have shown how deep the racism in the U.S. "justice" system goes, with black people receiving longer prison sentences than white people, with similar criminal histories, that committed the same crimes. Not to mention, the countless examples of black people imprisoned in the U.S. by all-white juries and openly racist judges. Within this, there are also countless tragic cases of people who have their lives taken away from them because of the brutal and inhuman prison system. Kalief Browder, who committed suicide in June of 2015 was one of these people. He was sent to Rikers Island in New York when he was 16 years old. He never received a trial throughout three years of imprisonment, including almost two years of solitary confinement.

The brutality, killing and targeting of black people and Latinos is an everyday occurrence. So common, in fact, that the phrase "Driving while black" which has existed for many years and used to describe the targeting of Black drivers by police officers, has expanded to "Walking while black." Take for example, New York City's "Stop and Frisk" policy which



Protest against the police murder of Mike Brown.

allows NYC police officers to stop anyone they deem suspicious. The New York Civil Liberties Union reported that, in 2014, police stopped people 46,235 times under this policy. 38,051 of these people were totally innocent. Of all of the people stopped, 55% were black, 29% were Latino and 12% were white.

Racism and Poverty are Rooted in History

Since the police murder of 18 year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in August of 2014, there has been an increase in the number of police killings in the U.S. that are making international media. This has been due in part to the struggle of the Black community and their allies who have not been able to take the blatant racism and murder by police officers silently anymore, pushing their call for justice to the forefront of public discussion.

This has sparked an important discussion about racism in the U.S., a discussion that must take into account the legacy of slavery and the long history of the suppression of black and brown people in the U.S. if it is going to work towards the elimination of racism in the U.S. For many, images of the police brutality against black and brown youth at a swimming pool party in Texas invoked other images of racism. Nearly 51 years earlier, on June 18, 1964 the owner of a white-only hotel in St. Augustine, Florida poured acid into a swimming pool where Black people and their allies had organized a swimming protest against segregation. This is only one example of the many that could be used to show the ways that racism and poverty in the Black community has persisted in the years since the Civil Rights movement, and has continued in the time of the U.S.'s first Black President.

But, it is also important to recognize that gains for black people in U.S. society have been won and understand the character of those gains. Since the end of slavery in the U.S. in 1865, and because of the struggle of black people and the support of others who marched alongside them, the lives of black people in the U.S. have improved in many ways, especially in certain sectors of society. But, the one thing that persists is the level of poverty, brutality, violence and racism experienced by overwhelmingly majority of black people.



Protesters hold placards with the eyes of the murdered Eric Garner. New York, Dec. 12, 2014

During the time of slavery in the U.S., racism was used to justify the use of slaves, which represented the cheapest form of labor in the U.S. economy. For the ruling elite of the U.S. during slavery, it was only possible to keep a population enslaved if it was considered to be different and lesser, in fact, more animal than human, by the majority of the white population. Today it is no different, racism is the means by which the majority of an entire population, the Black population, is once again impoverished and enslaved.

For the capitalist class in the U.S., racism is merely a method they can employ to keep a pool of cheap labour that is poor, terrorized and divided. Without racism and the poverty that it both feeds off of and perpetuates, the capitalist system bent on ever increasing profits would not work.

In one of his final speeches before he was assassinated, Civil Rights leader Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said something that is as relevant today as it was nearly 50 years ago "There are forty million poor people here, and one day we must ask the question, 'Why are there forty million poor people in America?' And when you begin to ask that question, you are raising a question about the economic system, about a broader distribution of wealth. When you ask that question, you begin to question the capitalistic economy. And I'm simply saying that more and more, we've got to begin to ask questions about the whole society...And you see, my friends, when you deal with this you begin to ask the question, 'Who owns the oil?' You begin to ask the question, 'Who owns the iron ore?' You begin to ask the question, 'Why is it that people have to pay water bills in a world that's two-thirds water?' These are words that must be said."

Whether in the U.S. or Canada, it is time that we ask ourselves that same question, and work to eradicate the diseases of racism and poverty once and for all.

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June 6, 2015 - Children protesting in Sanaa, Yemen. Signs read "Don't kill children in Yemen", "Don't kill my Dad and Mom" and "Islam is a religion of peace"

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July 7²⁰¹⁵ **1150 Commercial Drive @ William Street**
7pm

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